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[THE GUILTY CONSCIENCE.]

THE GIPSY PEER, or, A SLAVE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

CHAPTER VI.

Caught in the toils he shrinks the fowler's hand
And looks for help on sea or sky or land,
But round his limbs the subtle snare doth coil
And makes him captive after all his toil.

MR. HORACE DENVILLE, having gained a position of advantage, was not the man to relinquish it without a severe struggle to gain his end. Mr. Horace Denville's object in life—since he had been old enough to have any object at all—had been to make a rich marriage.

He was the younger son in a family impoverished by a century of extravagance and wastefulness. His brother and all his friends had always impressed upon him that, as far as they were concerned, he could expect no assistance of a pecuniary kind, and that he must absolutely make his own way in the world.

Up to this time Mr. Denville had, notwithstanding his good looks, high-bred manners and influential connexions, not succeeded in making that way. He had had several chances, but fate had mercifully interposed and saved his victim.

Between Emilia Slade and himself there was a fast friendship and alliance, which had been brought about in rather a peculiar manner.

That young lady had been launched in the world upon a similar principle, and rumour was so far willing to aid her in her hunt for a rich husband by giving her credit for a large fortune.

Of course Mr. Denville spread his nets to capture her, and succeeded so well as to be able to make her an offer of marriage.

At this point Miss Emilia's shrewd acuteness did her good service. The proposal was made in a conservatory.

"Mr. Denville," she said, in her gushing way, but with a certain calculating look in her light eyes, "I

shall be very happy to marry you if you'll answer me two questions."

Mr. Denville made a suitable reply, accompanied by a vow of devotion, and she put the questions: "How much money have you, Mr. Denville?—and do you think I have any?"

They certainly were cool questions, and for a moment the man of the world was staggered, then he saw the game was not worth the candle.

"My dear Miss Slade," he said, "such delightfully candid questions deserve equally plain and truthful answers. Alas! I have no money, but I was happy in the thought that fortune had been more liberal to you."

"Then," said Miss Emilia, "what a fortunate escape! Mr. Denville, you should be more careful. However, although we cannot afford to marry we can be friends."

"And allies," said Mr. Denville.

"Exactly," said Miss Slade, with a sharp look. "I may be able to help you to a good wife, Mr. Denville."

"And I," said he, thoroughly understanding her, "may perhaps be able to introduce you to some one more worthy of your hand than I."

On that understanding they had carried on their friendship ever since, and now they seemed very likely to attain their ends, if fortune should but smile.

Horace Denville was a quick reader of character. He saw at once that the usual mode of attack would never win Florence. Flattery disgusted her; servile concurrence in every opinion or trifling speech she made would weary and bore her. She was a well-read and accomplished girl. A man who could hope to win her love must be quick to catch her moods and harmonize with them; must be a scholar; something of a hero; and, above all, an accomplished gentleman.

Setting these things before him plainly, he commenced the attack.

He would ride over to EarlsCourt in the early morning with a new volume of poems or travels. If Florence had not read them he would read some parts to her, inviting and respectfully receiving her

comments, but always taking exceptions to some of them.

If she had read them he would walk up and down the terrace with her, discussing and criticizing the latest productions of the arts.

At these promenades and conversations Miss Slade was always present, but, as she freely confessed that literature wearied her and painting was a nuisance, and generally reclined on a seat at some little distance with a novel in her hand, her presence did not detract from the tête-à-tête character of them.

Sometimes Lord Raymond would accompany his friend, and as he of course was thoroughly of Miss Slade's opinion as regarded such stupid nonsense, the two formed another tête-à-tête and one quite as significant.

Then they rode out together to the EarlsCourt woods, and here again chance seemed to divide the four into two distinct couples.

Miss Slade's mare was not so fast as Mr. Denville's or Florence's, and she generally dropped behind; Lord Raymond always kept her company, and while Horace Denville was exchanging thoughts and ideas with Lady Florence the sullen and morose young lord would recount some of his fast-life experiences to the sympathizing and always interested Emilia.

He knew every turn of his weak, selfish and passionate nature. It was a study for a Machiavelli to note how cunningly she contrived to foster all his petty arrogance and self-conceit. His small feats of courage she elevated to deeds of heroism, his weak, vulgar jokes she lauded as the wit of a Scribe. She was continually falling into bashful raptures of admiration of his dark hair, long thin hands and black eyes.

No wonder that Lord Raymond became more intolerable than ever to the lofty-minded, high-souled Lady Florence Dartesgle.

No wonder that to her Mr. Horace Denville, as seen by the side of the underbred, ill-mannered and low-minded Lord Raymond, was an accomplished gentleman and pleasant companion.

While things were going thus dangerously

smoothly at Earlecourt and Northcliffe, with Tazoni life had taken another strange aspect.

He who had been once the calmest if not the most contented of men, he who had been the pride of his tribe and the pattern of serene dignity, had suddenly become restless, changeable, and dissatisfied.

How little he slept, Lurli, whose attentive ears were ever thrifly watching for his movements, could alone tell.

From the tent which she occupied with Martha she could see his stalwart form rise from the rug beside the fire, and pass out into the outer darkness, always disappearing in the direction of the Earlecourt woods.

Notwithstanding this lack of sleep, the sun always rose upon his labour; the strokes of his huge glittering axe were swifter and stronger than ever.

The farmers and landowners entered into an eager competition for his services. He could do twice as much work as an ordinary labourer, and was so scrupulously honest as regarded the outlay of his time and strength that he required no over-allowing.

In fact, although the stolid farmers were far from guessing it, the immense labour which would have exhausted another man was a positive relief to him. He put his heart, which had throbbed lately with a strange and mystic emotion, into his work.

Anxious eyes watched him in the camp; the old woman, Martha, would place before him her choicest dishes, and when he barely tasted and turned from them with a weary and impatient gesture would remove them with stolid silence.

The men who gave him their allegiance were equally respectful; they saw the change, and in their uncout fashion regretted it, but it was not for them to annoy him with questions or idle gossip.

They went about their work with their usual dogged stupidity, maintaining when round the camp fire as profound a silence as his own, and peering occasionally under their dark brows at his absent face and clouded eyes.

In truth, they had nothing to complain of. He neglected none of his duties to them, he looked after their welfare as seriously as ever, and when he returned at night with the money which his day's toil had earned he threw it, every penny, with a smile, into the common fund.

At last Lurli, with an inward trembling, broke the silence which his instinctive fear and awe of him had cast as a spell upon her.

He had come into the camp one evening, axe in hand and great beads of perspiration upon his brow. The men had gone to a horse and cattle fair some miles distant. Martha sat fanning the flame of the supper fire.

Tazoni flung himself down on the rug, and fell immediately into his moody reverie.

Lurli watched him from a little distance for a few moments in silence, then softly approaching him she placed her small brown hand upon his shoulder.

He started.

"Is it thou, Lurli?" he said, with a smile that was but a shadow of his old serene one.

"Tazoni," she said, "why dost thou work so hard? Thou art as tired to-night as the carthorse yonder. Nay, do not deny it, I can see it in thine eyes."

She paused, but having strung her courage to the point, she was not to be deterred, and continued quickly, but with a certain trembling accent in her voice that belied her smile of confidence:

"Too much work killed the lion, thou knowest, and a little, they say, is too much for a gipsy. For six days—yea see I have counted them—thou hast worked like a slave and hast eaten nothing, for six nights thou hast not slept more than an hour, unless thou sleepest in the wood yonder. Tazoni, what ails thee? Come, don't look so angry at the sister!"—she hesitated a little at the word and passed on more quickly—"but tell her who never had a secret from thee what witchcraft has fallen on thee."

He tried to smile as he took her hand and fondled it with the off-hand affection of a brother.

"Thou talkest like one of the ancient oracles of our race, Lurli. Witchcraft is an extinct science. No sorceress has thrown her potent spell upon thy brother. If anything ails me—and I know of nothing save the shadow which thy fond fears have created—it is the fever which they say lurks in the woodman's axe. Woodcutting, Lurli, is charmed work. It is like fighting. With every tree you fell you get a keener thirst for destruction. I think, sometimes, there could be no more ecstatic joy for such a hero of the woods as I am than to be placed axe in hand in a world-wide forest free to cut where and when I would."

He sprang to his feet with a short, sharp laugh.

"With such a charter one might slay all idle fancies, and lay to rest fantastic, childish moods. In labour alone in contentment to be found, and if I have not found it yet it is, Lurli, because I have not laboured enough. But courage! I'll still pursue the search and gain it."

Lurli shook her head with a sad smile.

"Thou speakest, Tazoni, like the king thou art; but though thy words sound like words you read me from thy books they do not satisfy me. Who ever heard of that nameless fever but thee? Something beyond this casts its shadow on thy brow and lips. If thou wilt not trust me, at least do not deceive me. Thou cannot not cut trees at midnight."

"No," he said, with a laugh. "Now that thou hast hit upon something tangible I'll tell thee why I haunt the Earlecourt preserves. I have turned spy and thief-catcher, Lurli."

"Thou?" she said, with flashing eyes. "And at whose bidding?"

A crimson flush dyed his face at her scornful question; but he replied, calmly enough.

"Ay, even I. Some rogue has been poaching in my Lord Dartagle's preserves; he says 'tis one of our men. I denied it, and to give some body to an empty denial have promised to catch my thief and scorch him. As yet he has proved the keener man of the two. Three several nights have I been upon his heels, but, like a snake, he slips through my fingers and leaves me balked of my prey. Did I not know that every soul of our men was asleep in the camp—for, mark you, Lurli, I go round and count them before I start—I would have sworn it was a gipsy; none but a gipsy could be so swift of foot and keen of ear. I thought there was something of the snake in my composition, but this fellow is a very ghost, and escapes my clutch when I could almost fancy my fingers close upon him. But I have sword to have him, and I will, though he were the fiend himself. Not a word of this, Lurli; I have trusted thee, thou seest, to the full."

"And this is all?" said Lurli, after a moment's silence, during which he had relapsed into his absent reverie.

"All!" he said, with an almost imperceptible evasion. "To be so balked by a dog of a poacher. Why, 'tis enough to cloud the brow of an Aristotle and spoil the rest of a Cato. But to-night it shall not do so. Here's Martha, punctual as the sun. Five minutes for a plunge in the stream and I'll devour her dainties like a locust of Egypt."

He strode off, returned with his hair glittering like gold from its contact with the water, and sat down with an appearance of light-heartedness to the meal, but before five minutes had passed his mood had returned upon him, and the plate was pushed aside.

Lurli rose softly and fetched from the tent an old guitar that had done good service at many a fair and fete.

Softly still she touched the strings and played a few plaintive chords, then, in the liquid, full-toned voice of her race, she sang a melody which had often soothed the last moments of some swart-browed, toil-worn gipsy.

Tazoni listened with bent brows, motionless as a statue. Presently, however, the hand which lay open upon the grass clenched as if with pain, then suddenly he sprang to his feet, and, with his bosom heaving like that of a man struggling with an emotion that near mastered him, he said, brokenly:

"Sing no more, Lurli; I cannot bear it!"

The postman was ambling past the camp—Her Majesty's mail for these parts was conveyed by means of an old mare and an old man, both gray—and chuckled to himself with extreme satisfaction at its quiet aspect, and mumbled that everything was changed, even gypsies, who used to be in his younger days a reckless, dishonest lot, and were now steady, grave and reliable.

He had quite a small budget of letters for Northcliffe, and not a few of them were directed to Lord Raymond himself.

Wine parties in chambers, petits suppers at Ricamond, and presents of gems and jewellery cannot be given for nothing, and his lordship had run through a great deal of money over and above the really liberal allowance which the generous earl allowed him.

When a young nobleman exceeds his allowance there is only one course open to him, and that is to fly to the sons of refuge—the Iraclites.

When the postman delivered the letters into his lordship's own hands he noticed the dark scowl with which he received them.

Half a dozen of them were from fashionable tradesmen, all begging respectfully to remind his lordship that his account was considerably overdue.

Two were from Jews; and one headed St. Mary Axe and subscribed Levy Jacobs hinted pretty plainly that if Lord Hursley did not settle the little bill, which had fallen into the esteemed Israelite's hands, he, Mr. Levy Jacobs, should be compelled to take steps, etc., etc.

Well might Lord Raymond scowl.

The bill was a heavy one, drawn to pay debts incurred at club whist and on the turf—both of which modes of getting rid of money Lord Northcliffe had warned him against.

He crushed the note in his hand, and thrust it into his pocket with an oath.

What was to be done? Levy Jacobs would not be at all likely to wait another month, when his allowance fell due, and, supposing the Jew proved so obliging, Lord Raymond knew that the proceeds of his father's generosity were already mortgaged and owed twice over in a hundred different quarters.

What was to be done? When men with no principle want money badly they generally have recourse to bad modes of acquiring it. They beg, borrow, or steal.

Lord Raymond could not beg—his proud, insolent nature rendered that impossible; he could not borrow, for his credit with his friends and the Jews was exhausted; and as to stealing—well, he might prefer that to the other means—but of whom was he to steal?

Perplexed and infuriated, he strode, muttering and swearing, on to the terrace.

A footman announced dinner, and, after swearing at the man for disturbing him, he repaired to the dining-room.

He was generally silent, so that his sullen avoidance of conversation was not noticed.

When Lady Northcliffe had left the room, however, his temper took a different turn, and he launched out into a flood of pointless jokes and ribald levity that, though intended to charm his father, simply disgusted and pained him to such an extent that he rose after a few moments, and, ever unwilling to give pain, even to those from whom he received it, said, mildly:

"Raymond, you talk too wildly; your mother would not like to hear you say such things. I cannot conceive where you heard or learnt them."

"The world's grown old since you were young, sir," retorted the young man, with covert insolence.

"Then I am afraid it has not improved in manners nor gained in honour. Do not stay long, but join me in the drawing-room."

"Thanks, my lad," said Lord Raymond, filling his glass, "but I have to go down to the stables, and I am going to have another glass or two."

Lord Northcliffe left the room with a suppressed sigh. No one knew—nobody, perhaps, the wife of his bosom—how deeply he dreaded the strangely bold and plebeian spirit of his son and heir.

Lord Raymond drew one of the carved chairs towards him, threw his feet upon the delicately embossed seat, and dragged the decanter of old port close to his elbow.

The dining-room looked out upon a small shrubbery from one of the windows, and towards this Lord Raymond's overseas face was turned.

He had emptied the decanter and was rising to leave the room when a man's face appeared at the open window. It was only for a moment, but Lord Raymond's muddled senses grasped the outline of a dark, swarthy countenance and the gleam of a pair of black eyes.

Before he could do aught but drop into his chair again, and open his mouth with astonishment, the apparition—if creation of the fancy it was—had disappeared.

After recovering his presence of mind, which had been utterly routed for the time, the young lord ran to the window, and, throwing it open, stepped on to the terrace.

Looking swiftly from right to left, and discovering no trace of the visitor's presence, he walked into the shrubbery, and returned after ten minutes' searching.

"This beastly wine gets into my head!" he said, striking the quaintly cut decanter with a wanton savageness. "It's only fit for common farmers. Claret's the proper drink for a gentleman. By Heaven! I'll have a little of it, and wait for a second appearance of the spirit," and he rang the bell.

He finished the bottle of claret, but without any other result than that of partial intoxication; and when he rose to go into the drawing-room he had sufficient wit left to understand the danger of carrying out such a step.

"I'm regularly screwed!" he remarked, with a vacant face. "It's all owing to that vile Jew. I'll take a stroll in the woods, and get cool, or else there'll be a row. A man's a good deal better without a father and mother, I think; then he can do as he likes—be his own master," and, repeating the words with a scowl, he caught up his hat and stumbled into the open air.

The fumes of the wine clung to him longer than he expected, and, stumbling and hiccupping at every step, he passed through his father's wood into Lord Dartagle's before he was aware of it.

Having reached the Earlecourt forest, which was much thicker than Northcliffe, he lost his way, and at last, utterly exhausted and incapable, sank on to a heap of leaves and moss, and there fell asleep.

While Lord Raymond was wandering about the narrow paths a much higher type of humanity was gliding with practised dexterity through the dense undergrowth.

Tazoni had, after his adjuration to Lurli, abruptly left the girl, and, snatching up his gun, made for his nightly duty.

It was a beautiful night, with just sufficient star-light to keep his feet from stumbling, and he went cautiously along, stopping to listen attentively every now and then. His thoughts were divided between the matter he was now engaged on and a train of fancies which Lurli's music had intensified. These fancies, which were not so dim but that they had clouded his brow and stirred his soul to its very depths, were yet so intangible that he dared not give them freedom or speech.

Enough that they embodied the beautiful face of Lady Florence Darteagle, and that he kept them down as a devoted lover would have sought to suppress a throng of fiends, in the shape of a favourite temptation.

Still, strive as he might, her calm, beautiful face, with its clear, tranquil eyes, would haunt him in the obscurity and silence of the night, and, as he listened to the soft breeze among the trees, he found himself harmonizing it with the scarcely less soft tones of her voice.

With an effort, however, he cast his fancies from him, and sternly set himself to the task he had in hand.

The night was a favourable one for poaching; the cunning visitant of the Earls-court preserves would, no doubt, be at his illegal work. Once or twice Tazoni fancied that he heard the crisp crushing of a leaf which denotes a footprint, but the result proved only the advent of a keeper, who nodded or stopped to talk with him, and went on his way, gun in hand, and eyes all alert.

At last, towards midnight, Tazoni heard the peculiar rustling among the leaves which had always preceded the mysterious poacher, and, with heart beating fast, and eyes painful in their acuteness, he lowered himself behind a bush, and waited.

The noise seemed to be near him, and, at last, when he had almost despaired of keeping his patience within bounds, he saw the dusky form of a tall, lithe man rise cautiously from the ground, dragging what he had little doubt was a hare snare behind him.

Tazoni raised his rifle, and covered him, then in a low but clear voice that breathed with suppressed excitement said :

"Move a step and I fire!"

The figure paused for a second, and, instead of facing the gun as Tazoni had fully expected, swiftly turned its back, and, with the utmost audacity, sprang on one side.

The movement had been so daring and sudden that Tazoni, who had not given a poacher credit for so much courage, hesitated a second before firing, then, when he did so, it was with an aim rendered uncertain and fruitless, for, with a hoarse laugh of derision, the figure plunged into the undergrowth and disappeared.

Tazoni dropped his gun and dashed after him, but although he ran as swiftly as the man could possibly have done he could not overtake him, and when, at last, he felt persuaded that it was so, he listened, but could not hear the slightest orakle among the leaves or rustle among the hedges. Deciding that his prey was hiding near at hand, he commenced a cautious and exhaustive search, but all to no avail.

Once again the poacher had escaped him.

With a sigh of vexation, Tazoni, knowing that all farther search would be useless, retraced his steps, regained his gun, and returned with weary feet to the camp.

No sooner had he gone than a tall figure rose seemingly from the very ground itself and strolled away in the opposite direction; and in that also of the spot where Lord Raymond lay asleep.

With stealthy steps the poacher reached him, coming up behind him, and took him for some one on the watch. He raised a thick, iron-headed stick with murderous intent, and in another instant it would have descended upon the dark head of the young lord, but at that moment he moved, a diamond stud glittered in the starlight, and the figure's hand fell harmless to its side.

CHAPTER VII.

In peace love tunes the shepherd's tread,
In war he mounts the warrior's steed,
In halls in gay attire is seen,
In hamlets dances on the green.
Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
For love is heaven and heaven is love. Scott.

THE vagabond poacher looked down upon the sleeping lord in silence. Then a thought or suspicion seemed to strike him and he bent down and looked keenly on the flushed face.

"Drunk," he muttered, with an evil grin. "Well, they say drunk as a lord, and so I suppose it is all right. Diamonds in his shirt-front, diamonds in his wrists and money to buy plenty more diamonds in his pocket, and here am I scouring through a wood for my life and scarcely able to snatch a rabbit. Seems

strange! I've heard clever people say life is a strange game, but there are few of them as ever come across a stranger than this. I'll wake him; if he's got any of the proper breed in him he'll collar me like a dog."

So saying he grasped the young lord's shoulder and shook him roughly.

Lord Raymond grunted and groaned for a second, then stumbled to his feet; a sense of his position and its danger struck him at the sight of the dark, swarthy face above him, and, with an exclamation half of fear and half of anger, he clutched the poacher by the arm.

"What are you doing here, you vagabond? You're a poacher and want to rob me, I know, but it's no go, my man, there's a dozen keepers near at my call."

"But you won't call, my lord," said the poacher, with cool ferocity, not unmixed with sarcasm.

"Why not?" said Lord Raymond, instinctively falling back a pace.

"Because if you open your mouth wider than it is now I'll shut it for the last time."

Lord Raymond loosened his grasp on the man's arm, and glared at him with vicious longing.

It was too dark to see anything more than the outlines of his face; but the gleam of the two savage eyes showed plainly that their owner, be he who-ever he might, was not a man to be trifled with.

"Who are you?" asked Lord Raymond, with sullen anger.

"One as means what he says, my lord, and says no more than what he means," was the reply.

"You know me it seems," said Lord Raymond.

"Better than you think for," retorted the poacher, with grim significance.

"I am Lord Raymond Hursley," said Lord Raymond, pomposly. "Not a mere nobody you can molest and rob with impunity, my fine fellow; you know that, so now I warn you. Better give it up for a bad game and bolt. I'll let you off this time—"

"You're exceedingly kind," said the man, interrupting him. "I think it's all the other way. It's a question whether I'll let you off, my young shaver."

"And give you a sovereign for your impudence," continued Lord Raymond, holding out the coin.

"Thanks, my lord, that'll do as a small instalment," he said, with a grin, as he caught the young man's hand and drew off a diamond ring from the finger, with the sovereign.

At the man's touch some unpleasant feeling thrilled through Lord Raymond's frame and he shuddered.

"Now be off," he said, with an assumption of calmness which he was far from really possessing.

"It's getting late and I'm cold."

"I'm not," said the poacher, "and I'm in no hurry. I've been wanting you for some time, my lord, and been dodging you about for a week."

"You came to the dining-room window to-night?" said Lord Raymond, his curiosity discovering itself in his tones.

"You're right; I did, and I should a' come in only I saw you weren't in a fit state for a gentleman to speak to. My lord, you drink too much for a young fellow; take the advice of a man old enough to be your—father," he grinned at the word, and again Lord Raymond felt the unpleasant thrill—"and drop it."

"Keep your advice, with your insolence, till they are asked for," said Lord Raymond, angrily, "and if you have anything to say to me say it sharp and be off, or else I shall call the keepers. I'm a match for you, I think. You want money, I suppose?"

"That's it," said the man, utterly disregarding the threat. "I want a hundred pounds."

Lord Raymond laughed unpleasantly.

"To be frank with you," he said, "so do I."

"I know that," said the man.

Lord Raymond started and peered with greater curiosity than ever at the face confronting him.

"You do, eh? Perhaps you know all my affairs," he said.

"Pretty nearly," retorted the man, coolly. "But it's getting cold, as you say, my lord, and it don't much matter what I know and what I don't. I want this hundred pounds, and I must have it. Them diamonds in your shirt-front must be worth five times as much. I'll take them instead of the cash, though the ready money 'd be more convenient."

"And suppose I say I won't give them to you?" said Lord Raymond, drawing a little farther away.

"Then I shall knock you on the head with this stick and help myself," said the man. "Or, better still, walk off and write a letter to your noble father giving him the whole true and particular account of that little nobbling job you did so neatly at New-market."

In spite of himself Lord Raymond uttered an exclamation of alarm.

"Who the fiend are you?" he exclaimed, hoarsely. "And how did you know of that—that—affair?"

"That's telling," said the man, with a grin.

"You see I do know of it, and I thinks, if you ask my

opinion, as it was a pretty neat bit of swindling for a lord. But, come, no more palavering; hand over the diamonds and let me be off."

Lord Raymond hesitated.

"If I give them to you will you leave the country?"

"No," said the man, with grim defiance, "I'm too fond of England and you, my lord. I'm going to watch over you and give you lots of advice."

"Advice?" said Lord Raymond, tearing out the diamonds in sheer despair.

"Ay, advice," said the man, dropping the precious stones into his pocket. "Don't trouble the wine-bottle so much, keep clear of the Jews and make up to Lady Florence a little more."

"Lady Florence!" exclaimed Lord Raymond.

"Ay," said the poacher. "Marry her as soon as you can, and make all safe."

"What do you mean?" asked Lord Raymond, in a hoarse whisper, leaning against the tree and wiping the cold perspiration from his face.

"What I say," retorted the poacher, shortly. "Earls-court's nice nest-egg to fall back upon if anything should happen to you. This is a rare uncertain world, and you might lose Northcliffe some of these days."

"Lose Northcliffe! My man, you are out of your mind! I am Lord Northcliffe's son and heir—never."

"So you may a-thought of these 'ere diamonds," retorted the man, "and yet they're gone you see. Take my advice and marry the Earls-court girl; you're all safe then."

Lord Raymond laughed.

"If you say much more, I shall call the keepers and get my diamonds back, my man," he said, scornfully. "You are a plucky fellow, but an idiot. I tell you I am Lord Northcliffe's only son, and therefore the estates are as good as mine already. You've picked up some cock-and-bull race-meeting story and think you've got hold on me. But you are mistaken. I'm not to be bullied or frightened out of money or diamonds. If I see your face again—"

"You haven't seen it at all yet," said the man, with a grin.

"But I know you," said Lord Raymond, threateningly. "I should know you among a thousand, and I'll pick you out before the week's over, for all your impudence."

The man stooped down and drew something from his pocket.

Lord Raymond thought it was a pistol and drew back behind the tree, and would have shouted for assistance but fear held his tongue.

The next instant, however, the man scraped something along the bark of a tree and held up a lighted taper above his head.

"Have a look at my face, my lord," said the man, with a sardonic smile. "It will help you to remember me."

Lord Raymond looked and stepped back.

The features, from the thin-cut lips and dark eyes and dark hair, were a reflex of his own.

He shuddered, and grasped a bough of the tree with a trembling hand, while his face blanched in the faint yellow light of the taper.

"Who—who are you?" he demanded, hoarsely.

"I am—," said the man.

Then he checked himself, and suddenly looked with unmitigated scorn at the young man's craven face.

"Impossible," he exclaimed, insudibly. "I can't be the same blood as that cur."

Then aloud he said, threateningly:

"I am a man who don't know what fear is, and so beware, my lord!"

Lord Raymond, completely unhinged by emotion, the man's face and his concluding words had called forth, lost his presence of mind and uttered a faint scream.

With an oath the poacher knocked him down and plunged into the bushes, dragging the queer-looking bundle after him.

As if they were echoes of Lord Raymond's cry, half a dozen whistles rang through the woods, lights flashed to and fro, and in a few minutes three or four keepers sprang to the spot.

For a moment Lord Raymond seemed unable to talk, and returned the amazed stare of the men with a glare of alarm. At last he gained breath.

"Rogers," he said, "it's all right. It's I, Lord Raymond. I came into the wood for a stroll and caught sight of a poacher. I followed him up to here and had a struggle with him. He—he threw me—or knocked me down at last and slipped into the bushes."

"Which way, my lord?" asked the keeper, excitedly, while the others flashed their torches round, eager for the pursuit.

Lord Raymond pointed in the opposite direction to that taken by the poacher, and the men started off like hounds unleashed.

Lord Raymond, however, called the head keeper back.

"You stay here, Rogers," he said, faintly. "The fellow has given me a nasty knock, and I think I'll get home. Give me your arm."

"I hope you are not hurt, my lord," said the keeper, giving him his strong arm with a look of concern. "Bless me, my lord, your diamond studs are gone!"

"Have they?" said Lord Raymond, with a tone of annoyance. "I felt the fellow tug at my chest, and I suppose that is when he took them. Never mind, we must follow him up."

"Did you see him, my lord?" asked the keeper.

"N—o," hesitated Lord Raymond. "We struggled for a long time, but I could not see him. He was tall, and had big dark eyes, I think."

"I'll lay my life," said the keeper, slapping his thigh, "that it's Gipay Luke! He was seen hanging about last week, and he's as desperate a poacher as we've got."

"Gipay Luke?" repeated Lord Raymond. "Marion Smeaton's husband?"

"That's him, my lord, and a regular scoundrel. To my mind, there ain't a burglary or rick-burning done for ten miles round but what he has a hand in it; and there's no getting him neither. That's the job of it; he's slippery as an eel, and after doing a few nights' poaching, right under your nose, as you may say, at night, will meet you in the village the next morning as smiling as a red Indian. But if you like, my lord, we can have him arrested on suspicion."

"No, no," said Lord Raymond, almost eagerly. "From what you say, I'm sure my robber can't be this fellow. He was short, and too big altogether. No, don't make any stir about it, but keep a sharp look out, and—Rogers, do you ever give 'em a little powder and shot?"

The keeper looked, by the light of the torch, at his lordship's face, and was rather puzzled by the evil scowl upon it.

"Ay, my lord; we do sometimes get a shot at 'em. Not often."

"Hem!" said Lord Raymond, "I think I should give this fellow a little dose of this," and he touched the keeper's gun. "That's the best thing for poachers."

The keeper shook his head, with a laugh.

"They won't let me do that, my lord," he said; "they call it murder."

"Oh, no," said Lord Raymond, softly—as the tempter himself might have urged it. "My father is the nearest magistrate, and he would call it justifiable homicide, in self-defence. Give 'em some powder and shot, Rogers."

(To be continued.)

SPANISH COAL.—M. Grand, describing the coal fields of Spain to the Paris Society of Civil Engineers, estimated their area at 150,000 hectares (the hectares being about 247 acres), from which only 500,000 or 600,000 tons are annually extracted, while Belgium, with the same area, yields ten millions of tons. The Spanish coal fields are situated in Castile, Leon and Asturias. The processes are described as being very rough and imperfect. M. Delesse stated that the coal of the Asturias was adapted for gas-making.

THE MOUTH.—The mouth is the frankest part of the face. It can the least conceal the feelings. We can neither hide ill temper with it nor good. We may affect what we please, but affections will not help us. In a wrong cause it will only make our observers resent the endeavour to impose upon them. A mouth should be of good natural dimensions, as well as plump in the lips. When the ancients, among their beauties, made mention of small mouths and lips, they meant small only as opposed to an excess the other way. The sayings in favour of small mouths, which have been the ruin of so many pretty looks, are very absurd. If there must be an excess either way, it had better be the liberal one. A pretty, pursed-up mouth is fit for nothing but to be left to its complacency. Large mouths are oftenest found in union with generous dispositions than very small ones. Beauty should have neither, but a reasonable look of openness and delicacy. It has an elegance in lips, when, instead of making sharp angles at the corner of the mouth, they retain a certain breadth to the very verge, and show the red. The corner then books painted with a free and liberal pencil.

DR. BEKE.—The sudden death of Dr. Charles Beke removes another of our famous African explorers. He was of a good age, having been born in October, 1800; but he kept up his active work until a comparatively recent period. He began life as a merchant, and while he was engaged in commercial pursuits he lived abroad for several years. He was acting British Consul in Saxon from 1836 to 1838. It was not until 1841 that he made his first African exploration, and in the course of it he traversed a considerable district in Abyssinia, between Shoa and Godjam, previously un-

known to Europeans. For this achievement he received the gold medals of the Geographical Societies of London and Paris. After this he did not resume his travels for many years, but in 1865 he went with his wife, who had accompanied him on some of his previous journeys, to Abyssinia to try and obtain the release of the Abyssinian captives, which they unfortunately did not succeed in doing. Dr. Beke was a prolific writer, and his works on the Nile and its sources are well known to geographers. He was a Fellow of the Geographical Society and of the Society of Antiquaries. Dr. Beke had a pension of 100*l.* for his public services.

CAST ON THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

Ab, little child, who so ruthless
To leave thee in the cold, wild night?
Could n'one be found to keep thee safeless
And shelter thee from harm and affright?
Chaucer.

THE sultry September day was ended, and as the sun went down a dark thunder-cloud came slowly rolling up the heavens, muttering in deep undertones, and emitting occasional gleams of fire by way of heralding the fearful storm, from which both man and beast intuitively sought shelter.

Ere long the streets of Mayfield were deserted save by the handsome carriage and spirited grays, which went dashing on.

Its occupant, the proud Mr. Wilton, leaning back among his cushions, paid no heed to the lightning flash, so absorbed was he in the letter he sometimes crumpled in his hand, and again cast at his feet, just as he wished he could trample down the audacious stranger who had dared thus to address him.

Through the gate, and up the long avenue, lined with giant trees of maple and of beech, the horses flew, and just as the rain came rattling down in torrents they stood panting before the door of Beechwood.

"Bring me a light! Why isn't there one already burning?" he cried, as he stalked into his library, and banged together the door with a crash scarcely equalled by the noise of the tempest without.

"He's got up a little thunder-storm on his own account! Wonder what's happened him now!" muttered Rachel, the housekeeper, as she placed a lamp upon the table, and then silently left the room.

Scarcely was she gone when her master, seating himself in his arm-chair, prepared to read again the letter which had so much disturbed him.

It was post-marked at a little out-of-the-way place, and it purported to have come from a young mother, who asked him to adopt for his own a little girl, nearly two months old.

"Her family is fully equal to your own," the mother wrote; "and should you take my baby you need never blush for her parentage. I have heard of you, Mr. Wilton. I know that you are rich—that you are comparatively alone and, strange as it may seem, I would rather my child should go to Beechwood than any other spot in the wide world. You need her too—need something to comfort your old age, for with all your money you are far from being happy."

"The deuce I am!" he muttered. "How did the woman know that, or how did she know of me? I take a child to comfort my old age! Ridiculous! I'm not old—I'm only forty-five—just in the prime of life; but I hate young children, and I won't have one in my house! I'm tormented enough, and if that woman bring her here, I'll—"

The remainder of the sentence was cut short by a peal of thunder so long and loud that even the exasperated Mr. Wilton was still until the roar had died away; then, resuming the subject of his remarks, he continued:

"Thanks to something, this letter has been two weeks on the road, and as she is tired of looking for an answer by this time I shan't trouble myself to write. But what of Richard? I have not yet seen why he is in Hampshire, chasing after Hetty, when he ought to have been home weeks ago."

And taking from his pocket another and an unopened letter, he read why his only son and heir of all his vast possessions was in Hampshire "chasing after Hetty," as he termed it.

Hetty Kirby was a poor relation, whom Mr. Wilton's wife had taken into the family, treating her with the utmost kindness, and on her death-bed committing the young girl to her husband's care, bidding him be kind to Hetty for her sake. In his crusty heart there was one soft, warm spot—the memory of his wife and brown-haired daughter, the latter of whom died ere she had been one year a bride. They had loved the orphan Hetty, and so, for their sakes, he had kept her until accident revealed to him the fact that to his son, then little

more than a boy, there was no music so sweet as Hetty's voice—no light so bright as that which shone in Hetty's eye.

Then, indeed, the lion was roused, and he turned her from his door, bidding her go back where she came from, while Richard was threatened with disinheritance if ever he dared to think again of the humble Hetty. There was no alternative but to submit, for his father's word was law, and, with a sad farewell to what had been her home so long, Hetty wended her way to the low-roofed house where dwelt her mother and her half-imbecile grandmother.

Richard, too, returned to college, and from that time not a word had passed between the father and the son concerning the offending Hetty until now, when Richard wrote that she was dead, together with her grandmother—that news of her illness had been forwarded to him, and immediately after leaving college, in July, he had hastened to Hampshire, and stayed by until she died.

"You can curse me for it if you choose," he said, "but it will not make the matter better. I loved Hetty Kirby while living, I love her memory now that she is dead; and in that little grave beneath the hill I have buried my heart for ever."

The letter closed by saying that Richard would possibly be home that very night, and he asked that the carriage might be in waiting at the station.

The news of Hetty's death kept Mr. Wilton silent for a moment, while his heart gave one great throb as he thought of the fair-haired, blue-eyed girl who had so often ministered to his comfort.

"Poor thing, she's in Heaven, I'm sure," he said; "and, if I was ever harsh to her, it's too late to help it now. I always liked her well enough, but I did not want her making love to Richard. He'll get over it too, even if he does talk about his heart being buried in her grave. Stuff and nonsense! Just as though a boy of nineteen knew where his heart was. Needn't tell me. He'll come to his senses after he's been home awhile; and that reminds me that I must send the carriage for him. Here, Ruth," he continued, as he saw a servant passing in the hall, "tell Joe, Richard is coming home, and he must meet him at the station."

Ruth departed with the message, and Mr. Wilton returned again to his letters, particularly the one which had offered a child for his adoption. Very closely he scrutinized the handwriting, but it was not one familiar to him. He had never seen it before, and, tearing the paper in pieces, he scattered them upon the floor.

The storm by this time had partially subsided, and he heard the carriage wheels grinding into the gravelly road as Joe drove from the house. Half an hour went by, and then the carriage returned again; but Richard was not in it, and the father sat down alone to the supper kept in waiting for his son. It was a peculiarity of his to retire precisely at nine o'clock; neither friend nor foe could keep him up beyond that hour, he said, and on this evening, as on all others, the light disappeared from his room just as the nine-o'clock bell was heard in the distance.

But Mr. Wilton was nervous to-night. The thunder which at intervals continued to roar, made him restless, and ten o'clock found him even more wakeful than he had been an hour before.

"What ails me," he exclaimed, tossing uneasily from side to side, "and what the deuce can that be? A baby as I live!"

And raising himself upon his elbow he listened to what was indisputably an infant wail, rising even above the storm, for it had commenced to rain again, and the thunder at times was fearfully loud.

"Scream away," said Mr. Wilton, as a cry, sharper and more prolonged, fell upon his ear; "but I'll know why a Christian man, who hates children, must be driven distracted in his own house," and, stepping into the hall, he called out at the top of his voice, "Rachel!" but no Rachel made her appearance; and a little further investigation sufficed to show that she had retired.

Mr. Wilton returned to his room and tried to sleep, succeeding so far as to fall into a doze, from which he was aroused by a thunder-crash, which shook the massive building to its foundation, and wrung from the watch-dog Tiger, who kept guard without, an almost deafening yell.

But to neither of these sounds did he pay the least attention, for, mingled with them, and continuing even after both had died away, was that same infant wail, tuned now to a higher, shriller note, as if the little creature were suffering from fear or bodily pain.

"Might as well try to sleep in Bedlam!" exclaimed the exasperated man, stepping from his bed a second time, and commencing to dress himself, his nervousness and irritability increasing in proportion as the cry grew louder and more alarming.

Striking a light and frowning wrathfully at the sour, tired-looking visage reflected by the mirror, he descended the stairs and entered the kitchen, where



[THE FOUNDLING.]

everything was in perfect order, even to the wood laid upon the hearth for the morning fire. The cries, too, were fainter there and could scarcely be heard at all, but as he retraced his steps and came again into the lower hall he heard them distinctly, and also Tiger's howl.

Guided by the sound, he kept on his way until he reached the front door, where a thought flashed upon him which rendered him for an instant powerless to act.

What if that woman, tired of waiting for an answer to her letter, had taken some other way of accomplishing her purpose? What if he should find a baby on his steps?

"But I shan't," he said, decidedly; "I won't, and, if I do, I'll kick it into the street, or something!"

And emboldened by this resolution he unlooked the door, and, shading the lamp with his hand, peered cautiously out into the darkness.

With a yell of delight Tiger sprang forward, nearly upsetting his master, who staggered back a pace or two, and then, recovering himself, advanced again towards the open door.

"There's nothing here," he said, thrusting his head out into the rain, which was dropping fast through the thick vine leaves which overhung the lattice of the portico.

As if to disprove this assertion, the heavens for an instant blazed with light and showed him where a small white object lay in a willow basket beneath the seat built on either side of the door.

The tiny fingers which clasped the basket edge were white and pure as wax, while the little dimples about the joints involuntarily carried him back to a time when just such a baby hand as this had patted his bearded cheek or pulled his long black hair.

Perhaps it was the remembrance of that hand, now cold in death, which prompted him to a nearer survey of the contents of the basket, and, setting down his lamp, he stooped to draw it forth, while Tiger stood by trembling with joy that his vigils were ended, and that human aid had come at last to the helpless creature he had guarded with the faithfulness peculiar to his race.

It was a fair, round face which met his view as he removed the flannel blanket, and the bright, pretty eyes which looked up into his were full of tears. But he hardened his heart, and though he did not kick the baby into the rain, he felt strongly tempted to do so, and, glancing towards the cornfield not far away, where he fancied the mother might be watching the result, he shouted:

"Come here, madam, and take the child away, for I shan't touch it, you may depend upon that."

Having thus relieved his mind, he was about to re-enter the house, when, as if divining his intention, Tiger planted his huge form in the doorway, and effectually kept him back.

"Be quiet, Tiger, be quiet," said Mr. Wilton, stroking his shaggy mane; but Tiger refused to move, until at last, as if seized by a sudden instinct, he darted towards the basket, which he took in his mouth and carried into the hall.

"It shan't be said a brute is more humane than myself," thought Mr. Wilton, and, leaving the dog and the baby together, he knocked at the door of Rachel's room and bade her get up at once.

But a few moments elapsed ere Rachel stood within the hall, her eyes protruding like harvest apples when she saw the basket and the baby it contained. Kneeling down, she took the wee thing in her arms, called it a "little honey," and then, woman-like, examined its dress, which was of the finest material, and trimmed with costly lace.

"Its petticoats are all worked with floss," she exclaimed.

"Petticoats be hanged!" roared Mr. Wilton. "Who cares for worked petticoats? The question is, what are we to do with it?"

"Do with it?" repeated Rachel, hugging it closer to her bosom. "Keep it, of course," and she gave it another squeeze, this time uttering a faint outcry, for a sharp point of something had penetrated through the folds of her dress. "There's somethin' fastened to it," she said, and, removing the blanket, she spied a bit of paper pinned to the infant's waist. "This may explain the matter," she continued, passing it to Mr. Wilton, who read, in the same handwriting as the letter, "Heaven prosper you, Mr. Wilton, in proportion as you are kind to my baby, whom I have called Mildred."

"Mildred," repeated the judge, "Mildred ——"

He did not finish the sentence, for he seemed to hear far back in the past a voice much like his own, saying aloud:

"I Jacob, take thee, Mildred, to be my wedded wife."

The Mildred taken then in that shadowy old church had been for years a loving, faithful wife, and another Mildred too, with starry eyes and nut-brown hair, had flitted through his halls, calling him her father. This woman must surely have known of this when she gave to her offspring the only name in the world which could possibly have touched his heart. With a perplexed expression upon his face he stood rubbing his hands together, while Rachel launched forth into a stream of baby talk.

"For Heaven's sake stop that! You women are idiots with babies!"

"Wasn't Miss Milly as silly as any of us?" asked Rachel, who knew his weak point; "and if she was here to-night, don't you believe she'd take the little creature as her own?"

"That's nothing to do with it," returned Mr. Wilton. "The question is how shall we dispose of it? — to-night, I mean, for in the morning I shall see about its being taken to the workhouse."

"The workhouse," repeated Rachel. "The baby ain't a-goin' to the workhouse. I'll take it myself first. Shall I consider it mine?"

"Yes, till morning," answered Mr. Wilton, who really had no definite idea as to what he intended doing with the helpless creature thus forced upon him as it were.

He abhorred children—he would not for anything have one abiding in his house, and especially this one of so doubtful parentage, still he was not quite inclined to cast it off, and he wished there was some one with whom to advise. Then, as he remembered the expected coming of his son, he thought, "Richard will tell me what to do!" and, feeling somewhat relieved, he returned to his chamber.

Mr. Wilton tried again to sleep, but all in vain were his attempts to woo the wayward goddess, and he lay awake until the moon, struggling through the broken clouds, shone upon the floor. Then, in the distance, he heard the whistle of the night express, and by that token he knew it was past midnight.

"I wish that woman had been drowned!" said he, rolling his pillow into a ball and beating it with his fist. "Yes, I do, for I'll be hanged if I want to be bothered this way! But, hark! I do believe she's prowling round the house yet," he continued, as he thought he caught the sound of a footstep upon the gravelled walk.

He was not mistaken in the sound, and he was about getting up for the third and, as he swore to himself, the last time, when a loud ring of the bell, and a well-known voice calling, "Father! father! let me in," convinced him that not the obnoxious woman but his son Richard had come. Hastening down the stairs, he unlocked the door, and Richard Wilton stepped into the hall, his boots bespattered with mud, his clothes wet with the heavy rain, and his face looking haggard and pale by the dim light of the lamp his father carried in his hand.

"Why, Dick!" exclaimed his father, "what ails you? You are as white as a ghost."

"I am tired and ill," was Richard's reply. "I've scarcely slept for several weeks."

"Been watching with Hetty, I daresay," though

the father; but he merely said, "Why didn't you come at seven?"

"I couldn't conveniently," answered Richard; "and, as I was anxious to get here, I took the night express, and have walked from the station. But what is that?" he continued, as he entered the sitting-room and saw the willow basket standing near the door.

"Dick," and the father's voice dropped to a nervous whisper—"Dick, if you'll believe me, some woman has left a baby on our steps. She wrote first to know if I'd take it, but the letter was two weeks coming; I didn't get it until to-night, and, as I suppose she was tired of waiting, she brought it along right in the midst of that thunder shower. She might have known I'd kick it into the street just as I said I would."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed the more humane young man, "you surely didn't thus cruelly treat the innocent child."

"No, I didn't, though my will was good enough," answered the father. "Just think of the scandalous reports that are certain to follow. It will be just like that gossiping Widow Simms to get up some vile yarn, and involve us both! But I shan't keep it—I shall send it to the workhouse."

And, by way of adding emphasis to his words, he gave the basket a push, which turned it bottom side up and scattered over the floor sundry articles of baby wear which had before escaped his observation. Among these was a tiny pair of red morocco shoes.

"Look, father," said Richard, taking them up and holding them to the light. "They are just the size of those Sister Mildred used to wear. You know mother gave them, because they were the first; and you have them still in your private drawer."

"Yes, Dick," said his father, as he thought of all this. "Tis like our dear Milly's, and, what is a little mysterious, the baby is Mildred too. 'Twas written on a bit of paper and pinned upon the dress."

"Then you will keep her, won't you? and Beechwood will not be so lonely," returned Richard, continuing, after a pause. "Where is she? I am anxious to see her."

"The deuce take it—it ain't mine—there ain't a drop of Wilton blood in its veins, Heaven knows, but I knew 'twould be just like you to want it. You have the most unaccountable taste. There isn't another young man of your expectations who would ever have cared for that—"

"Father," and Richard's hand was laid upon his arm. "Father, Hetty is dead, and we will let her rest, but, had she lived, no other woman would I have called my wife."

"And the moment you had called her thus I would have disinherited you, root and branch," was the father's savage answer. "I would have seen her and you and your children starve before I would have raised my hand. The heir of Beechwood marry Hetty Kirby! Why, her father was a blacksmith—do you hear?"

Richard did hear, but he made no reply, and, striking another light, he sought his chamber, where varied and bitter thoughts kept him wakeful until the September sun shone upon the wall and told him it was morning. He heard the sound of Rachel's voice, and was reminded by it of the child left there the previous night. He would see it for himself, he said, and, making a hasty toilet, he speedily carried out his resolution.

Bending over the sleeping infant, he parted gently the silken rings of soft brown hair clustering around the baby's brow, smoothed the velvety cheek, and even kissed the parted lips.

The touch awoke the child, who seemed intuitively to know that the face bending so near its own was a friendly one, and when Richard took it in his arms it offered no resistance, but rather lovingly nestled its little head upon his shoulder as he wrapped its blanket carefully about it.

CHAPTER II.

To be wroth with one we love

Doth work like madness in the brain.

Coleridge.

LITTLE MILDRED lay in the willow basket where Richard had placed her. Between himself and father there had been a spirited controversy as to what should be done with her, the one insisting that she should be sent to the workhouse, and the other that she should stay at Beechwood. The discussion lasted long, and they were still lingering at the breakfast-table when Rachel came in, her appearance indicating that she was the bearer of some important message.

"If you please," she began, addressing herself to Mr. Wilton, "I've just been down to Cold Spring after some water, for I wanted a strong cup of hyson this mornin', bein' I was so broke of my rest, and that pump won't make such a cup as Cold Spring."

"Never mind the pump, but come to the point at

once," interposed Mr. Wilton, glancing towards the basket with a presentiment that what she had to tell concerned the little Mildred.

"Yes, that's what I'm coming to. I went into Mr. Thompson's. I didn't go in to tell 'em anything particular, but when Mrs. Hawkins, in the bedroom, give a kind of lonesome sigh, which I knew was for her dead Bossy, I thought I'd speak of our new baby that come last night in the basket, so I told 'em how you wanted to send it to the workhouse, but I wouldn't let you, and was goin' to nurse it and bring it up as my own, and then Mrs. Hawkins looked up sorry-like, and says, 'Rather than suffer that I'll take it in place of my little Bossy.'

"You ought to have seen her then—but I didn't stay to hear more. I came home as fast as ever I could."

Richard turned to his father and said:

"It strikes me favourably, this letting Hannah Hawkins take the child, inasmuch as you are so prejudiced against it. She will be kind to it, I am sure, and I shall go and see her at once."

There was something so cool and determined in Richard's manner that his father gave up the contest without another word, and silently watched his son as he hurried along the beaten path which led to the cold spring.

Down the hill, and where its gable roof was just discernible from the windows of the Beechwood mansion, stood the house which for many years had been tenanted by Hezekiah Thompson, and which, after his decease, was still occupied by Hephzibah, his wife.

Only one child had been given to Hephzibah—a gentle, blue-eyed daughter, who, after six years of happy wedlock, returned to her mother—a widow, with two little, fatherless children—one a lame, unfortunate boy, and the other a beautiful little girl.

Toward the boy with the twisted feet she looked askance, while all the kindest feelings of her nature seemed called into being by the sweet, winning ways of the baby Bossy; but when one bright September day they laid the wee one away beneath the autumnal grass, and came back to their home without her, she steeled her heart, as it were, against the world, and the miserable Hannah wept on her lonely pillow, uncheered by a single word of comfort, save those her little Oliver breathed into her ear.

Just one week had Bossy's grave been made beneath the maple when Rachel bore to the cottage news of the strange child left at the master's door, and instantly Hannah's bleeding heart yearned toward the helpless infant, which she offered to take for her own.

At first her mother opposed the plan, but when she saw how determined Hannah was she gave it up, and in a most unamiable frame of mind was clearing her breakfast dishes away when Richard Wilton appeared, asking to see Mrs. Hawkins.

Although a few years older than himself, Hannah Thompson had been one of Richard's earliest playmates and warmest friends. He knew her disposition well—know, too, she could be trusted; and when she promised to love the little wif, whose very helplessness had interested him in its behalf, he felt sure that she would keep her word.

Half an hour later and Mildred lay sleeping in Bossy's cradle, as calmly as if she were not the subject of the most wonderful surmises and ridiculous conjectures. On the wings of the wind the story flew that a baby had been left on Mr. Wilton's steps—that he had vowed it should be sent to the workhouse; while the son, who came home at twelve o'clock at night, had evinced far more interest in the stranger than was at all commendable for a boy scarcely out of his teens.

"But there was no tellin' what young men would do, or old ones either, for that matter!" so, at least, said Widow Simms as she donned her shawl, and hurried across the fields in the direction of Beechwood.

Greatly was she relieved to find that the object of her search was farther down the hill, for she stood somewhat in awe of the stern Mr. Wilton and his proud son. But once in Hannah Hawkins's cozy bedroom, with the baby on her lap, her tongue was loosened, and scarcely a person in the town who could by any possible means have been at all connected with the affair escaped a malicious cut. The infant was then minutely examined, and pronounced the very image of Mr. Wilton, or of Captain Harrington, or of the deacon, she could not tell which. "But I'm bound to find out," she said; "I shan't rest easy at nights till I do."

And suddenly remembering that a kindred spirit, Polly Dutton, who lived some distance away, had probably not yet heard the news, she fastened her shawl and bade Mrs. Hawkins good morning just as a group of other visitors were announced.

All that day, and many succeeding ones, was the cottage crowded with curious people, who had come

to see the sight, and all of whom offered an opinion as to the parentage of the little child. For more than four weeks a bevy of old women, with Widow Simms and Polly Dutton at their head, sat upon the character of nearly every person they knew, and when at last the sitting was ended and the verdict rendered it was found that none had passed the ordeal so wholly unscathed as Richard Wilton. It was a little strange, they admitted, that he should go to Mrs. Thompson's cottage three times a day, but then he had always been extremely fond of children, and it was but natural that he should take an interest in this one, particularly as his father had set his face so firmly against it, swearing heartily if its name were mentioned in his presence, and even threatening to prosecute the Widow Simms if she ever again presumed to say that the child resembled him or his.

With a look of proud disdain upon his handsome, boyish face, Richard, who, on account of his delicate health, had not returned to college, heard from time to time what the gossiping villagers had to say of himself, and when at last it was told to him that he was exonerated from all blame, and that some had even predicted what the result would be, were his interests in the case to continue until she were grown to womanhood, he burst into a merry laugh, the first which had escaped him since he came back to Beechwood.

"Stranger things than that had happened," Widow Simms declared, and many a whispered conference she held with Hannah Hawkins as to the future, when Mildred would be the mistress of Beechwood, unless, indeed, Richard died ere she were grown, an event which seemed not improbable, for as the autumn days wore on and the winter advanced his failing strength became more and more perceptible, and the same old ladies who once before had taken his case into consideration now looked at him through medical eyes and pronounced him just gone with consumption.

Nothing but a sea voyage would save him, the physician said.

So when the spring was come he engaged a berth on board a vessel bound for New Zealand, and then after a pilgrimage to the obscure town where Hetty Kirby was buried he came back to Beechwood one April night to bid his father adieu.

It was a stormy farewell, for loud, angry words were heard issuing from the library, and Rachel, who played the part of eavesdropper, testified to hearing Richard say:

"Listen to me, father; I have not told you all."

To which the father responded:

"I'll stop up my ears before I'll hear another word. You've told me enough already; and, from this hour, you are no son of mine. Leave me at once."

With a face as white as marble Richard answered back:

"I'll do your bidding, father, and it may be long ere you hear my voice again; but, in the lonesome years to come, when you are old, and there is none to love you, you'll remember what you've said to me to-night."

The father made no reply, and without another word Richard turned away. Hastening down the Cold Spring path, he entered the gable-roofed cottage, but what passed between himself and Hannah Hawkins no one knew, though all fancied it concerned the beautiful baby Mildred, who had grown strangely into the love of the young man, and who now, as he took her from her crib, twined her chubby arms around his neck.

"Be kind to her, Hannah," he said. "There are none but ourselves to care for her now;" and, laying her back in her cradle, he kissed her rosebud lips and hastened away, while Hannah, from the window, looked wistfully after him, wondering much what the end would be.

CHAPTER III.

The years steal on, and day by day

Her native charms expand;

Her round face meets the summer ray,

Like the rose of her brest land.

Eliza Cook.

Now times the April flowers have blossomed and decayed; nine times the summer fruits have ripened and the golden harvests been gathered in; nine years of change have come and gone, and up the wooded avenue which leads to Mr. Wilton's residence, and also to the gable-roofed cottage, lower down the hill, two children, a boy and a girl, are slowly wending their way.

The day is balmy and bright, and the velvety grass in the autumn sunlight looks as fresh and green as when the summer rains were falling upon it, while the birds are singing of their nests in the far-off south land, whether ere long they will go.

But not of the day, nor the grass, nor the birds is the little girl thinking now, and she does not even stop to steal a flower or a stem of box from the handsome

grounds of the gross old man who many a time has screamed to her from a distance, bidding her quit her childish depredations; neither does she pay the least attention to the old decrepit Tiger, as he trots slowly down to meet her, licking her bare feet and looking wistfully into her face as if he fain would ask the cause of her unwanted sadness.

"Come this way, Clubs," she said to her companion, as they reached a point where two paths diverged from the main road, one leading to the gable roof, and the other to a brink of a rushing stream which was sometimes dignified with the name of river. "Come down to our playhouse, where we can be alone, while I tell you something dreadful."

Clubs, as he was called, from his twisted feet, obeyed, and in a few moments, they sat upon a mossy bank beneath the sycamore, where a humble playhouse had been built—a playhouse seldom enjoyed, for the life of that little girl was not a free-and-easy one.

"Now, Milly, let's have it;" and the boy Clubs looked inquiringly at her.

Bursting into tears she hid her face in his lap and sobbed:

"Tell me true—true as you live and breathe—ain't I your sister Milly, and if I ain't, who am I? Ain't I anybody?"

A troubled, perplexed expression flitted over the pale face of the boy, and, awkwardly smoothing the brown head resting on him, he answered:

"Who told you that story, Milly? I hoped it would be long before you heard it!"

"Then 'tis true—'tis true; and that's why grandma scolds me so, and gives me such little pieces of cake, and not half as much bread and milk as I can eat. Oh, dear, oh, dear—ain't there anybody anywhere that owns me? Ain't I anybody's little girl?" and the poor child sobbed passionately.

It had come to her that day, for the first time, that she was not Mildred Hawkins, as she had supposed herself to be, and coupled with the tale was a faint concerning her uncertain parentage. But Mildred was too young to understand the hint; she only comprehended that she was nobody—that the baby Bessy she had seen so often in her dreams was not her sister—that the gentle, loving woman who had died of consumption two years before was nothing but her nurse—and, worse than all the rest, the meek, patient, self-denying Oliver, or Clubs, was not her brother.

It was cruel the telling her this tale, and Maria Stevens would surely not have told it save in a burst of passion. But the deed was done, and like a leaden weight Mildred's heart had lain within her bosom that dreary afternoon, which, it seemed to her, would never end.

Wistfully she watched the sunshine creeping along the floor, and when at last it reached the four o'clock mark, and her class, which was the last, was called upon to spell, she drew a long sigh of relief, and taking her place mechanically toed the mark, a ceremony then never omitted in a school.

But alas for Mildred; her evil genius was surely in the ascendant, for the first word which came to her was missed, as was the next, and the next, until she was ordered back to her seat, there to remain until her lesson was better learned.

Wearily she laid her throbbing head upon the desk, while the tears dropped fast upon the lettered page.

"Grandma will scold so hard and make me sit up so late to-night," she thought, and then she wondered if Clubs would go home without her, and thus prevent her from asking him what she so much wished to know.

But Clubs never yet willingly deserted the little maiden, and when at last her lesson was learned and she at liberty to go, she found him by the roadside piling up sand with his twisted feet, and humming a mournful tune, which he always sang when Mildred was in disgrace.

"It was kind in you to wait," she said, taking his offered hand. "You are good to me;" then as she remembered that she was nothing to him, her lip began to quiver, and the great tears rolled down her cheeks a second time.

"Don't, Milly," said the boy, soothingly. "I'll help you if she scolds too hard."

Mildred made no reply, but suffered him to think it was his grandmother's wrath she dreaded, until seated on the mossy bank, when she told him what she had heard, and appealed to him to know if it were true.

"Yes, Milly," he said, at length, "'tis true! You ain't my sister! You ain't any relation to me! Nine years ago this month you were left in a basket on Mr. Wilton's steps, and they say he was going to kick you into the street, but Tiger, who was young then, took the basket in his mouth and brought it into the hall!"

Involuntarily Mildred wound her arms round the neck of the old dog, who lashed the ground with his tail, and licked her hand as if he knew well what it was all about.

Clubs told her next of the handsome, dark-eyed Richard, and, without knowing why, Mildred's pulses quickened as she heard of the young man who befriended her and carried her himself to the gable roof.

"I was five years old then, and I just remember his bringing you in, with your great long dress hanging 'most to the floor. He must have liked you, for he used to come every day to see you till he went away!"

(To be continued.)

SILVERSTONE'S HEIR; OR, THE MYSTERY OF BLACKROCK TOWER.

CHAPTER XXI.

"WHAT news from Silverstone? Have they buried poor Mrs. Delarue yet?"

The question was addressed to Mark Langton, who had, prior to his leaving the fishing village, made it his business to call on Dr. Philander. The morning was raw and bitter, and a bright sea-coal fire burned in the doctor's apartment.

Mark had upon his entrance to the room taken his thin black gloves off, and held his hands in front of the blaze to catch a little of its warmth, which act served to send a genial glow through his frame.

"The news," said Mark, abstractedly, looking with a longing gaze at the glowing coals in the fire grate. "Aham! I thought you might possibly have known what was passing in Silverstone yourself."

"Why should you think so?" demanded the doctor, half-sarcastically.

Mark hesitated, and commenced to rub his hands with visible discomposure.

"You surely do not imagine that I am vested with supernatural powers?" the other asked, pointedly.

"Oh, by no means," replied Mark, shifting uneasily in his chair. "But—"

"But what?"

"I was merely thinking of the disappearance of young Bainbridge."

"Ah, indeed! What of young Bainbridge?" Mark Langton fumbled for some mementos with his fingers, but, perceiving the doctor's keen eyes fastened upon him, he replied:

"Some people say that you know more of his disappearance than anybody else."

"Do they so?" rejoined the master of Blackrock, with extreme contempt. "Has it not occurred to you, Friend Langton, that the suppositions of some people are generally far from being correct?"

"It has. But I happened to think the same thing myself, to tell you the truth."

"Then more stupid you," rejoined the doctor, laughing. "However, Friend Mark, though I see you are inclined to vest me with supernatural powers, such as the clowns of Silverstone have thought fit to endow me, that is, nevertheless, no answer to my question."

Mark, in his uneasiness, drew his chair back a full pace from the fire.

"Hum!" he said, "I might as well have answered you at first. But are you in possession of no news at all from the village?" he asked, glancing at Dr. Philander with a kind of incredulous meaning.

"Certainly not, or I would not have asked you," was the reply. "Has anything gone wrong there besides the death of Mrs. Delarue?"

"Alas! poor woman!" sighed Mark, scarcely heeding the question. "She died so suddenly, and I may add in the very vigour of her womanhood. I thought there were at least thirty good years of life before her. It was a sad, sad thing; but you see how poor, weak mortals like ourselves may be deluded. 'In the midst of life we are in death' is such as the scriptural paradox."

"The man is surely mad," thought the doctor, staring hard at him. "What the deuce is he driving at?"

"You asked me, sir, had anything else gone wrong in Silverstone," said Mark, who noticed the look. "I regret to say there has. The village seems at present to be in a most deplorable state of disquietude."

"Ah!" the other ejaculated, with evident anxiety, then, controlling himself instantly, he asked what was the nature and cause of the excitement.

"Well, Harry Harland's disappeared for one thing," replied Mark, with not a little remorse.

"You surely don't mean that? Young Harland disappeared!"

"He has, indeed; and poor Laurence is in great distress over it."

"I am sorry to hear it," the doctor rejoined, sym-

pathetically. "Has search been made for the young man?"

"Yes; but without success; not a word can be gleaned of him."

"Unfortunate," muttered the doctor. Then aloud: "Is there any cause assigned for his disappearance?"

"None."

"He has not been foully treated?"

"It is not likely; Harry had no enemies. Perhaps I might except one," added Mark Langton, averting his eyes.

"One! And pray who is that?"

Mark hesitated.

"Come, speak out, man," said the doctor.

"Well, I must; if I must," rejoined Mark, with apparent desperation; "that one is Stanhope Bainbridge."

"But Stanhope Bainbridge has likewise disappeared. And in any event how could he have been an enemy?" asked Dr. Philander, incredulously.

"Just simply because he was a rival, doctor," replied Mark, glancing uneasily into the fire.

"A rival?"

"Ay, a rival."

The master of Blackrock turned to an almost livid hue. But the very next instant this gave way to a flush of shame.

Mark Langton still kept his eyes fixed on the fire, perfectly unconscious of the strange change that had come into his host's face.

"A rival," muttered Doctor Philander, arising from his chair and striding up and down the apartment, the annoyance and shame he experienced clearly discernible in his dark but somewhat flushed features. "Stanhope Bainbridge and Harry Harland rivals? Impossible!"

"No, not impossible," returned Mark. "The poor boy loves the girl as he loves his own life."

"And she returns his love of course?" said the master of Blackrock, with a sneer.

"And what if she did, sir?" replied Mark, boldly; "she wouldn't be the first who had loved a youth in her own station. In my opinion Harry Harland is quite as good as Marian Delarue any day."

"You know not of whom you speak, sir," almost screamed the owner, in sudden passion.

"I do so, sir," replied Mark, unmoved. "I think it a shame, doctor, that Marian should aspire to one so far above her."

Doctor Philander had been rapidly getting into a towering rage, but at this point he curbed himself and resumed his seat, wearing, at least outwardly, his usual placid expression.

"So Miss Delarue does not really return the young fisherman's affections?" he said, in a somewhat mollified tone.

"She does not, and sorry am I to say it. I think they would have made a good match—just suited to each other, as they both occupy the same stations in life. Besides, I admire the nobility of the young man's character. He has always been a model son, and such generally, so far as I have seen, make model husbands."

"Oh! ho!" the doctor laughed; but the laugh was very forced and Mark had sufficient penetration to see it.

"Ay, ay, you may laugh," he thought, "but sneers will not change my opinion in the least. I have journeyed so long through the world not to know what I am talking of. Stanhope Bainbridge may be an excellent young man in his way but he'll never make Marian Delarue a good husband."

By one of those strange and incomprehensible enigmas of which humanity is made up, Doctor Philander seemed to have guessed Mark Langton's thoughts.

"So you think that Stanhope Bainbridge and Miss Delarue ill mated?" he said.

There was the slightest touch of irony in his voice.

"I do indeed," was the simple rejoinder.

"Your reasons, most potent philosopher."

"Well, in the first place their positions in life are vastly different," Mark replied.

"Are you assured of that?"

"I am indeed."

"Would you be surprised, for instance, to hear that you are wrong?"

Mark looked at Doctor Philander as if he thought him in part distraught; but persevering at a second glance that such was not the case, he replied—not, however, without some hesitancy—that he would indeed be very much surprised to hear it.

"I thought so," was the reply, "but such is the case. However, this is not exactly the time and place to enter into explanations, therefore let the matter drop."

But Mark Langton was not to be put off in that sort of way, so he again cautiously approached the theme of their interview.

"I was told privately," he pursued, "no later than this morning, that the young squire's returned."

"This is news indeed," said the doctor, contemptuously. "Stanhope Bainbridge returned? Humph! I wish it were so."

But though the words came with seeming indifference from his lips he could not help, nevertheless, exhibiting a certain amount of uneasiness at the intelligence.

"Nor were these signs lost on Mark."

"Yes, returned," repeated that worthy, emphasizing the word.

"And pray who is your kind informant?" asked the doctor.

"A fisherman living near Stapleton."

"Mistaken identity," laughed Dr. Philander.

"Not at all, sir. He was positively certain it was young Mr. Bainbridge; he knows him too well to be mistaken."

"Why did you not inform me of this before?" said the doctor, uneasily.

Old Mark smiled.

"Because I thought it would be a pleasant surprise for you," he replied.

At that moment could be heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs outside the courtyard.

The doctor arose spasmodically to his feet and approached the window of the room. But that only looked out upon the bay and all sight of the land was nearly hidden from his view. In his momentary nervousness he seemed to be unconscious of his error, and again reseated himself.

Presently a triple rap reverberated on the door, and at the summons to "come in" a servant entered.

"Who is it?" was the doctor's impatient inquiry.

"Mr. Ronald Hamilton, sir."

"What can have brought him here?" muttered his master. "Show Mr. Hamilton up at once," he added, turning to the servant.

The man departed on his errand, and presently Mr. Hamilton was ushered into the room.

His face bore the hue of having ridden rather rapidly through a raw, chilly atmosphere.

"Good morning, doctor. I see you have company," he added, eying Mark Langton with much good nature.

"Oh, pray don't disturb yourself, sir," said Mark, "I have got through with my business and am going."

He put on his gloves and prepared to take his departure.

"Do you return to the village?" asked Mr. Hamilton.

"Yes, that is my intention, sir."

"Then you will meet with a pleasant surprise."

"May I ask what it is?" said Mark, with a great throbbing at his heart.

"Laurence Harland's son has come back," was the answer.

"For that Heaven be thanked," murmured Mark, and speaking thus he left the room, and was soon on his way to Silverstone, and with by far a lighter heart than he had experienced for some days past.

"So young Harland has returned?" said Dr. Philander, the moment he heard Mark's retreating footsteps as he descended to the courtyard.

"Yes," replied his visitor, who at the doctor's gesture drew a chair and seated himself within comfortable distance of the fire.

"I am glad of it, if only for old Laurence's sake, who is a man of the strictest integrity and the most sterling worth. What a foolish fellow to have left home through such a cause!"

"And pray what cause was that?" asked Mr. Hamilton, curiously.

"The thoughtless fellow, I am told, was in love."

"Humph!" the young man said, elevating his brows. "I thought it was perfectly natural to be in love. I can see nothing wrong in the feeling. The young man is only human like ourselves, I suppose."

"And like Mr. Ronald Hamilton in particular," laughed the doctor. "Oh, never look annoyed, my young friend. The truth will bear investigation; and, regarding your own suit, I wish you with all my heart every success. However," added he, "Harry is the lover who at least loves in vain."

And giving vent to his opinion the doctor chuckled unnaturally.

"Always and over the same," muttered Ronald. "Most incomprehensible being. His sufferings must have blunted every human feeling within his breast. How he chuckles over the miseries of others."

"Was this all you came to Blackrock for?" said Dr. Philander, after a while, "to inform me of the return of Laurence Harland's son?"

"No," replied Ronald. "Stanhope Bainbridge is here."

The doctor almost leaped from his chair.

"Heres—in Blackrock!" he exclaimed, incredulously.

"No, not in Blackrock," returned the young man, "but not very far from it—in Silverstone."

"Surely there is some mistake. Stanhope Bainbridge returned! I can scarcely believe it!"

"You may, indeed, believe it. And another gentleman with him with whom I have no doubt you are acquainted—an individual calling himself Captain Faulkner."

"This is most strange," said Dr. Philander, in a musing strain. "There can be no mistake here, I see. I apologize for doubting your word, Mr. Hamilton," he added; "but this news is quite unexpected. Faulkner has surely not played me false," he said, striding up and down the room in the most evident excitement; "no, no, I can stake my life and reputation on his integrity."

Ronald was somewhat struck with this scene.

"You seem, sir, to take on strangely at the reappearance of the young squire," he at last said. "I should have thought you would have been delighted to have heard of his safe arrival."

"So I am, Mr. Hamilton," the doctor rejoined; "but as there is a matter of some moment between us I would have been better pleased had he at first put in an appearance at Blackrock. You cannot possibly understand what I mean without some explanation from me, which, under the circumstances, may as well be given now as at any subsequent time—that is to say if you care to listen to the recital of a few facts which may account for the otherwise inexplicable character of my conduct."

The young man hastened to assure the doctor that he would be only too delighted to receive such a communication.

"My story is soon told," said the master of Blackrock, in the tone of one to whom such a theme is painful. "I am the elder of two sons to the same father by different mothers. I was always studious, always eager in the pursuit of knowledge, and instead of taking kindly to a landed gentleman's life I entreated my father to send me to London to study medicine. After some remonstrances he at last granted my request. When my medical course was finished I returned to Silverstone, but it had won less charms for me than before. At my father's wish I, however, remained at home for two or three years, but finally, perceiving my unhappiness, he agreed to my returning to London to engage in the profession of a physician. To succeed in London as a medical man was greater uphill work than I imagined. My patients were never very numerous; and but for the constant remittances which I received from home I know not what I should have done. However, I might have got on very well in the end, but happening to fall in love with a young girl several years younger than myself, I, after a month's courtship, married her. She was beautiful, virtuous, but poor and of low birth, therefore I did not acquaint my father of my act, fearing the consequences of his displeasure. About three months after this event, I was strongly urged by him to return home and be present at my half-brother's wedding, which was then about to take place. Having no other excuse to offer than the one I was afraid to mention, I left my wife in London and started for Silverstone. My brother and I had never been on very good terms, and I, as a consequence, did not see much of him till his wedding was over. Nor could I bear to be much in my father's society with the secret of my marriage troubling me. So I took long rambles by myself. On one memorable occasion which neither he nor I can ever forget, I met my brother alone at the very verge of the cliffs. We were both fatigued and sat down on a piece of rock to rest ourselves. Well, as was natural, the conversation soon turned on his marriage, and he jestingly rallied me on not taking a wife also. I know not what prompted me, but I confessed to him that I was already married, and in my simplicity of heart told him of my wife and her former circumstances."

Here the master of Blackrock paused to wipe his pallid brow and collect his thoughts.

"I had expected sympathy and comforting counsel from him," he went on, bitterly, at last, "but was met with reproach and anger. He even cried out in his wrath that no beggar's offspring should ever inherit Silverstone. As he said this he started to his feet to leave me. I laid my hand on his shoulder to detain and extract a promise from him that he would never divulge the secret to my father. He tried to shake my hand off, and, not succeeding, with a bitter anathema he hurled me from him—I staggered backwards, and missing my footing was in a moment precipitated over the cliffs—"

"Merciful Heavens!" exclaimed Ronald, interrupting him. "And you then are Arkwright Bainbridge?"

"I am indeed Arkwright Bainbridge," replied the master of Blackrock, smiling bitterly.

"But how did you escape?" asked the young man, looking with growing interest at him.

"When I came to myself," resumed the doctor, "for the fall had rendered me insensible, I found that I was in the forecastle of a man-of-war. It had been lying at anchor round the point and the officers had been exploring the many caverns that abound below the cliffs. They were fortunately pulling past as I fell and rescued me. Before I recovered my senses the ship was at sea, and, having no other choice left, I became a sailor."

"But you surely have not been a man-of-war's man to within the last few years?" said Ronald, surprised.

"No, indeed," replied the doctor, with a smile. "I managed to give my shipmates the slip when abroad, and have passed through many strange vicissitudes since then. But this is not exactly the time to enter into details," he quickly added. "It is sufficient to tell you I made enough money to keep me all my days, then returned to England. As you will readily believe, the first inquiries I made were for my wife; but it was long before I could gather any trace of her. At last I discovered that she had died the year after I left, but not before she had given birth to a daughter. Her relatives were all dead, the child was taken care of by the parish and afterwards adopted by a fisherman and his wife. These, I discovered, had removed many years before, and in spite of the most diligent search I could get no trace of them."

"How old would your daughter be if she were living?" asked the young man, prompted to ask the question by some strange influence over which he had no control.

"Nineteen," was the reply, given tremblingly.

The master of Blackrock turned away to hide his emotions, and for some moments not a word was spoken on either side.

"Strange and mournful history," murmured Ronald.

"When I came here," resumed the doctor, not heeding him, "it was not surprising that no one recognized me. So many years' residence in a tropical climate had wrought a change upon me which rendered recognition simply impossible. And what did I find on my coming here? I found that my father had died without being told the cause of his disappearance; that my half-brother, Adam Bainbridge, had never tried to discover my wife, and that he was careless whether she starved or not so long as he enjoyed the fruits of my absence. Ever since, as far as I can understand, he has never shown the slightest remorse for what he has done. But I also discovered something else, which at present I am not at liberty to divulge."

"Seeing all these things, Mr. Hamilton," continued the doctor, after a painful pause, "it did not tend to cherish feelings of good-will towards Mr. Bainbridge. My first idea was to strip him of his possessions and make him feel the bitter pangs of poverty to which he had consigned my unhappy wife. But the noble qualities of his son rendered this inclination powerless, and I found my liking for the young man growing stronger and stronger each day."

"One afternoon, as I was fishing near the cliffs, I discovered Stanhope Bainbridge lying bruised and insensible among the rocks, and I conveyed him hither. The circumstances in which I found him recalled vividly to my mind what had happened to myself nearly twenty years before that; and the memory of all I had suffered in the long interval which followed caused the bitterest feelings to arise within me. I thought upon my father, suffering through my absence, and mourning over my loss, while the cause of it all was kept in profound and guilty silence. Then came to my mind the long years of peril and anxiety through which I myself had passed, while he who had doomed me to it was enjoying ease and plenty, without displaying any visible signs of remorse."

"I have now serious doubts whether I acted wisely or not," continued the doctor, "but I determined to see if a short period of a like anxiety would lead him to contrition. When Stanhope was sufficiently recovered I told him as much of my story as was needful, then prevailed upon him, by threatening otherwise to denounce his father, to accept a mission from me to a settlement of my own abroad. He is now on his way there. And that, Mr. Hamilton, is my explanation," ended the ex-physician, with a sigh.

"I can scarcely believe but that this is all a dream," said Ronald, bewilderedly. "Strange and wonderful story!"

"And nevertheless as true as it is strange and wonderful," said the master of Blackrock, sadly.

"You were my father's dearest friend, and as such I regret the misfortunes and sufferings that have been entailed upon you by one whom you have looked upon for over twenty years as your most bitter enemy. Would to Heaven it were not so," the young man said, sighing deeply.

While Ronald spoke Doctor Philander walked the room in an excited state.

"Oh, what a fiend they have made me," he moaned. "Would to Heaven they could be forgotten—wiped out for ever. Oh, unhappy, miserable man that I am—how I have suffered! But for one thing I can forget all—my daughter! Thank Heaven! She is at least spared to me."

A thousand thoughts now flitted through the young man's mind. Marian Delarome arose radiant and beautiful to his vision. Could she be the child of such a strange being?

While he was thinking thus Doctor Philander approached, and, laying his hand heavily on his arm, said:

"You may think this outburst of feeling strange, Mr. Hamilton; but I pray you to overlook it."

The doctor now crossed the room, and approaching a sideboard returned with a bottle of Burgundy. This was soon uncorked and the sparkling liquid poured into two exquisitely fashioned glasses. A box of cigars was next produced, and igniting a weed each puffed away in silence for some moments. At last Dr. Philander said:

"Our last interview in the room was under different auspices, Mr. Hamilton."

"It was indeed," Ronald replied; "let us hope the present one will terminate even more favourably."

"You have exactly expressed my own wish, sir," said Doctor Philander, gravely, "though I confess that considerable uneasiness might be removed if the young man and Faulkner had hastened here."

"I have not the slightest doubt that they are on their way now," said Ronald.

"Yet I can scarcely understand why they left Mexico so soon. There must be something wrong there, and I am terribly anxious to know what it is."

Doctor Philander did indeed feel anxious. He could not account for this sudden and entirely unexpected appearance of Stanhope Bainbridge and his friend Captain Faulkner. He supposed that many months must elapse ere he could see or even hear from them. No letter had arrived since they had departed for San Antonio, and though his suspicions were previously awakened that Don Pedro Cespedes had not acted honestly by him he was more than surprised at this unexpected arrival. First he imagined that Don Pedro was dead, then again that the mines had become suddenly exhausted. But the most probable supposition was that the numerous Salteadors had waylaid the treasures and plundered them. As for justice in Mexico, he knew that it only existed in name. On the whole then the intelligence he had received was certainly very startling to him.

He smoked with apparent calmness, but he was anything but calm notwithstanding—a fiery impatience consumed him; he never longed for the appearance of any one before so much as he did the two men who had recently returned from Mexico.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOME time was passed away in this kind of thoughtful silence when Doctor Philander again spoke.

"How did young Mr. Bainbridge look?" he asked.

"Very well, indeed," Ronald replied, "but as strong as a lion, and almost as bronzed as a red Indian."

"Ah! ha!" the doctor laughed. "So the voyage has evidently done him good?"

"The sea-air seems at least to agree with him," replied Mr. Hamilton, smiling.

"It agrees with most people," rejoined the doctor. "So you saw Captain Faulkner, too. How did he look?"

"As healthy and vigorous as a young steer. He informed me that he would have been in Blackrock two days ago but for adverse winds. It is as well he wasn't, perhaps, for, strange as it may seem, the delay was the means of saving Harry Harland's life."

"How, pray—how?" asked the doctor, curiously.

"Well, it just came about in this way. It appears the young man was on his way to London—but the story is too long; we had better reserve it."

"By no means," said Dr. Philander, "go on, I beg of you."

"Well, if you have time and patience to listen, I have no objection," rejoined Ronald Hamilton, laughing. "The young man was on his way to London, as I said before, and being too late at Stapleton to catch the night stage, he engaged a horse and started through Bleheim Wood, expecting, of course, to meet it at the next village, but the night being intensely dark he lost his way. In a state of most disagreeable uncertainty he paused, not knowing what course to pursue, when suddenly he heard a noise in the undergrowth. Fancying for an instant it might be occasioned by robbers, he stood on his guard. It only proved an old pedlar however, who was passing at the time through the

forest with his wares. Believing the man to be honest, and eager to catch the stage, he offered him a guinea to conduct him clear of the wood."

"And he accepted it, of course," said the doctor. "No, he didn't, but he offered to lead him to a cottage where he could obtain shelter for the night."

The offer was accepted, and, strapping the pedler's pack to the horse's back, they trudged by several bridle-paths through the woods.

"After proceeding a mile or so of the road the supposed pedler directed him to the cottage, and, despite all remonstrance, resumed his pack, and, wishing the young man good-night, disappeared in the darkness. There was nothing now left to him but to pursue his route alone, but he could not help harbouring certain strange misgivings at the manner in which the stranger left him."

"He went on, however, and after ten minutes' laborious walking he discovered a light gleaming through the trees. Blaming himself for suspecting the pedler's integrity, he pushed forward and drew up at a woodman's door. Knocking for admittance, a hale and stalwart-looking man answered the summons, and hospitably invited him to enter. But he had not been long in the apartment when a strange display of firearms renewed his suspicions—for you must know, before he left Stapleton he was informed that Bleheim Wood was infested by a gang of desperate ruffians who, in the garb of gypsies, plundered all they came across, and he was now more than ever assured that he had been unwittingly led into a den of thieves—"

"Not an unlikely fact that, either," interrupted the doctor. "But proceed. I long to hear how it terminated."

"After making remarks on what he had seen," pursued Mr. Hamilton, "which seemed to arouse his host to the highest pitch of fury, the latter brought in the supper, and even went so far as to account for the numerous arms, but the explanation was so unsatisfactory that young Harland determined more than ever that he had been unwittingly led into a den of thieves—"

"While the supposed woodman had left the apartment for a few moments he managed to appropriate a brace of pistols, and with these he retired, not, however, to rest, but to watch over his safety till morning.

"The woodcutter left a lamp with him, and approaching the bed the first thing he beheld, to his horror, were blood-stains on the pillow."

"A den of murderers, no doubt," the doctor thundered added.

"His next object," went on Mr. Hamilton, without heeding the interruption, "was to discover whether there was any means of egress besides the door from the apartment. To his horror and amazement he beheld none—not even a window. He next approached the door; it was locked. What was he to do? Feign sleep? His feelings at this point so overcame him that the lamp fell from his grasp, and in an instant he was in pitchy darkness. An hour of anxious watching passed. He suddenly heard a murmur of voices from the adjoining apartment. He made no doubt now but he was in the power of robbers. Presently the voices were hushed, and he heard a stealthy step in the passage. The door of his apartment opened and the voice of the woodman inquired if he was asleep. To this he of course returned no answer. Then his treacherous host asked him if he had extinguished the light, and, fancying by his continuous silence that Harland was slumbering, he closed the door behind him and returned to his companions."

Ronald now in a few brief words related all the particulars; the encounter of the young fisherman with the robbers, and their intention of dooming him to a horrible and lingering death, together with his rescue by the gigantic smuggler.

"This smuggler is evidently known then to Captain Faulkner," said the doctor.

"Well, from all accounts," replied Ronald, "the captain was very familiar with him, besides exercising considerable control over his actions. As to the robbers themselves, they are many miles away by this time from Bleheim Wood. It is not likely however that the Harlands will be troubled again by the woodcutter. The rascal seemed to entertain the notion that Laurence injured his son through malice prepense. But we know that the old man wouldn't hurt a child."

"I can vouch for his kindness in that respect," said the doctor. "But you say that Stanhope Bainbridge was mainly instrumental in saving the young fisherman's life."

"Yes, indeed, and all through a dream! Singular, wasn't it?"

"Most strange," said the doctor. "I am very proud to hear however that it was Stanhope's doing, for all enmity must now cease between them."

"I was not aware before that they were enemies," said Ronald, simply.

"They were rivals in love at least, and that means deadly enmity," rejoined Dr. Philander, laughing.

They had not proceeded farther when heavy steps were heard approaching the apartment, and the usual triple rap sounded on the door.

"Who is that?" asked young Hamilton, arising to his feet as if about to leave.

"Pray don't disturb yourself, sir," the doctor replied. "It is only the servant. Come in!" he shouted.

The servant opened the door and announced the presence of Mr. Stanhope Bainbridge and Captain Faulkner.

"Show them up at once," cried Dr. Philander, delighted. "Oh, never hurry away, Mr. Hamilton," he added, forcing the young man gently into his chair; "one of them is at least an old and dear friend of yours."

"But you may have business," interposed Ronald.

"Not anything that you may not listen to without injury."

Ronald Hamilton thought he never saw Doctor Philander looking so pleasant before, so he consented to remain a spectator of the interview.

Not more than a few seconds elapsed when the two visitors were ushered into the apartment. Stanhope looked handsomer than ever, although a little embrowned from exposure to the sun, and in his companion's face the usual cheerful expression made ample amends for what he might lack in other respects.

The doctor's manner was affectionate in the extreme, and the interview passed off most gratifyingly to all parties.

Captain Faulkner described in the most graphic manner the voyage to San Antonio, their treatment when they arrived there, Don Cespedes' treachery, and the manner in which they foiled both him and Don Alvarez, also their weighing anchor and putting out to sea.

"So the treasures are saved," said Dr. Philander, with gratified amazement. "You shall have a cheque at once, my dear Faulkner, for five hundred pounds."

"I have only done my duty," said the captain, modestly. "You owe much more to the energy and zeal of Mr. Bainbridge than to myself. Had he not acted as he had and foiled the two villains at their own game, you would undoubtedly have lost all."

"Of that I feel assured," returned the master of Blackrock, kindly, "and his reward shall be proportionate to his energy and good faith. I have a pleasant and I may say an unexpected surprise for you all. At present it's a secret." Then turning to Ronald Hamilton he said, "By the way, Mr. Hamilton, when do they bury poor Mrs. Delarome?"

"To-morrow, I believe," replied the young man, sadly.

"Poor Mrs. Delarome," sighed Stanhope, and all faces immediately wore an expression of sorrow; the young man's words of heartfelt sympathy were too genuine to be disputed. Besides, she was the mother of Marian Delarome.

"Then to-morrow," said the doctor, after a pause, "will I reveal the secret. It will be more than a source of astonishment to you all. You all of course means attending the poor lady's funeral?"

They nodded affirmatively; and at this stage the subject dropped.

The conversation now assumed a more pleasant complexion. All the visitors agreed that they had never seen the doctor look so jovial and affable in their lives.

Two or three hours flew by almost unheeded, so delighted were they with Captain Faulkner's rich fund of anecdote. He never seemed to want for something good to tell, and his style of relating things was unexceptionable.

"Bravo, captain!—bravo!" the doctor would cry; "that was certainly good. 'Here's to you, captain—may our friendship never flag,' and such like expressions."

The evening was rapidly advancing, when Ronald Hamilton, addressing young Bainbridge, said:

"Do you journey to the manor to-night?"

The reply was in the affirmative.

"Then it's about time we were setting out," said the young man. "Does Captain Faulkner accompany you?"

Here the doctor interposed.

"No," he replied, "the captain remains with me."

"Don't forget the funeral to-morrow, gentlemen," he called after them as they left the room.

They returned for reply that they certainly would not, then salled forth into the night.

The morning of Mrs. Delarome's funeral had arrived.

There was some excitement in the village when it was known that Dr. Philander was to attend the

funeral. Indeed, the doctor was in very bad odour just then among the villagers, some even ascribing the widow's death to his medical mismanagement, as they termed it.

"Yes," said they, "she would have been alive and well-to-day if he had tried the proper remedies; but he let the poor thing die without the least effort to save her."

Opinions of this kind very soon spread about, and even reached the doctor's ears before he got to Silverstone. But, not heeding the reports of the rough reception that was intended for him, he drove in an open carriage up the narrow streets of the village.

All work had ceased, and the fishermen were attired in their holiday clothes to attend the poor woman's remains to their last resting-place.

No sooner was the carriage caught sight of than it was surrounded, and angry and clamorous voices bade its occupant alight. But the coachman whipped on his horses and attempted to break through the living cordon that threateningly encompassed him.

This conduct only increased the fury of the incensed fishermen, who now proceeded to put certain of their threats into execution.

At that moment it would have fared hard with Dr. Philander had not a few of his friends been on the ground. It so happened that Ronald Hamilton drove into the village almost at the same time as himself.

Perceiving at a glance the danger in which the doctor stood from the menacing front of the infuriated crowd, he at once resolved to rush to his rescue. Calling in a loud voice for Harry Harland to follow him, he burst through the angry fishermen, and in another instant, in spite of all opposition, was at the side of the carriage.

"Drag the old sorcerer out!" shouted one burly fisherman. "We'll see whether his black art will save him a good drubbing."

"Tear the villain to pieces!" exclaimed another.

But ere either of them could get into the carriage to do its occupant any harm the stalwart form of Harry Harland was between the doctor and his assailants. Seizing the first of these by the body, he lifted him clean off his feet and hurled him back among the crowd.

This interference and the action with which it was accompanied were so unexpected that for a moment the efforts of the mob were paralyzed. It was no use, however, reasoning with the angry and infuriated men that composed it, so Mr. Hamilton, seeing that there was no time to be lost, urged Dr. Philander to alight from the carriage and fly for his life to the little house that was opposite.

The narrowness of the street, and the obstruction caused by the position of the carriage, made the task of clearing the way to the door of the cottage easier now, considering that Laurence Harland had also come up, assisted by a couple of stout fellows, who kept back the crowd by the furious flourishing of two heavy cudgels.

Nevertheless, it was not without a hard battle, in which some heavy blows were given and taken on both sides, that this was accomplished.

Finally, however, they all entered, and, after great difficulty, succeeded in securing the stout oaken door. This drove the crowd to almost the verge of madness.

"Take the pole from the carriage and burst it open!" shouted one burly fellow.

"That does not look as if they had the intention of going away," said Laurence, uneasily. "I cannot at all account for this disturbance; I never in all my life saw the people of Silverstone so exasperated! It is a lasting disgrace; and the day of the funeral, too! How did the row commence?"

A few words explained all.

"The foolish fellows!" cried the fisherman; "this comes of their ignorance and superstition. I wish we had a half-dozen policemen here, and we could show them a trick or two!"

"If we could give them time to cool down," said Harry, "there would be little danger."

"Perhaps not," said Mr. Hamilton, "but if we permit them to burst the door in, I fear they will give us a tough struggle enough of it."

They now listened with beating hearts, and heard the mob outside shouting:

"Bring out the old scoundrel and drown him; Silverstone has had a great deal too much of him! Burn the house if you cannot force the door!"

As these cries greeted the ears of Dr. Philander and his friends they grew seriously alarmed.

"What's to be done?" asked Laurence, appealing to Mr. Hamilton, who was now the recognized leader of the little party.

"It's a very awkward affair," returned the young man, with evident anxiety; "the passions of men once raised are not easily subdued, but I think if we

remain quiet here for a little while, they may go away."

"I am sorry, gentlemen, to have caused you so much inconvenience," said Dr. Philander, regretfully. "Perhaps it would be as well to open the door to them. It is me they want, and let them do their worst."

"Such a proposition cannot be listened to for a moment," replied Mr. Hamilton. "Fortunately the windows of this lower floor are too high and narrow to effect an entrance by them. Ha! here they come with the pole of the carriage. They mean breaking the door in."

"If they do," cried the owner of the cottage, a stout, stalwart-looking fisherman, "they shall dearly rue it. They'll find out soon enough that an Englishman's house is his castle. The first man that passes that doorstep, I'll brain him," and he looked too like a man who meant what he said.

"Will you open the door?" thundered a voice at this moment from the outside.

(To be continued.)

THE SWEET SISTERS OF INCHVARRA; OR, THE VAMPIRE OF THE GUILLAMORES.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN SHERWARD strode down to the balcony, whereupon this fever-stricken invalid might have been seen hoisting by the no means slender form of the fainting woman across his shoulders, and tramping upstairs as lightly as Samson with the gates of Gaza on his Titan back.

Depositing Zolande on the low couch which adorned Mr. Rochester's chamber, Captain Sherward squared round on his small companion.

"Now look here—you know this animal's got it sure enough, whether from fright or from some of the wrecked goods no one knows or cares; there was no sign of it aboard the 'Hesperides' that I saw; but this is the genuine thing and no mistake, of course the beggars down stairs 'll let her die, her chance is about the aliminst, but it shall be all as you say. There's nothing to hinder you and me from starting this very night on our journey. Shall we go?"

Aileen's breath began to come and go very fast—her eyes to shine through tears. To escape to-night—to begin her journey back to dear Inchvarra—to Vara!

But think again, Aileen!

There lies the woman who serves your enemy, and who has miserably helped to ruin you; she is smitten down by a disease which drives away all human aid; she will die if you forsake her!

Aileen's simple heart discerned but one road before her, and that was the path of duty.

"Oh, I could not leave Zolande while she is so ill!" cried she, with Heaven's own compassion in her sweet eyes. "I must nurse her through the fever."

Captain Sherward's reverent air came back. He would have knelt and kissed the border of her dress, if he had not feared she would be angry.

"You ain't going to wait on fever, little one!" said he, in a very soft sort of voice. "You know nothing about nursing."

"Don't I?" exclaimed Aileen. "We got Granny O'Drady out of typhoid fever, and, when the scarlet fever was in Inchvarra we nursed all Widow Doolan's children between us."

"Who's us?" queried the captain.

"Vara—Sister Vara," and the lovely face quivered again at the name.

"Sister Vara! Wish to Heaven she was!" muttered the sailor. "Look here, miss," said he, "since it's your will to stay until your servant's out of her trouble, I'll look after her, and you'll go to my quarters. I'm fever proof, you see."

"Nonsense!" returned Aileen, firmly; "no one shall take care of Zolande but me. I'm not so foolish as to allow the poor thing to be tended by a stranger—and a man at that. Not but that you may be a delightful nurse," she added, archly; "but you'd spoil all if you were to recover so very suddenly."

Sherward held out stoutly, and there was a spirited dispute between the pair; but Aileen eventually carried the day, and he was forced to retire, routed.

Zolande came back to animation, bat not to reason. She began to mutter wildly and to toss her arms about. Aileen got her over to her own bed, took off her fantastic attire, applied cold cloths to her head, and mustard blisters to her neck, and such simple remedies as she knew of; and soon the sufferer sank into a fitful slumber.

Then this good little girl slipped downstairs to improve her acquaintance with her new friend.

He seated her in a deep, easy chair, brought all the pillows he could find for her to rest her dainty

boots upon, then flung himself upon the lion's skin in front of her, and remarked:

"Now, this I call tip-top. Blessed if it ain't worth losin' the ship for! Haven't felt so—so homelike since mother died, and the old home smashed up. How jolly it must be to have a sister!" and he leaned his heavy arms upon his knees, reposed his head between his huge hands, and gazed with serious admiration upon the wee creature before him.

Captain Sherward had done himself the justice to wash the ochre from his face, to brush his croppie mop, and to don the dandiest coat he could find among the boxes which had been saved.

Aileen felt a singularly sweet sense of safety in that arm chair, with that human mountain casting its mighty shadow over her.

She gave a little satisfied chirrup.

"This is nice! What a mercy that you were wrecked! Isn't it wicked of me to say it, though?"

"Ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha!" laughed the giant. "Bless her little heart!"

"I don't feel a bit as if I had only really made your acquaintance to-day," continued Miss Aileen, apologetically. "I wonder if Kenelm is as splendid as—"

Then she stopped, blushing at her own boldness in complimenting such a stranger to his face.

"Tell us how yo' got into this pill-box?" remarked Sherward, anxious to make himself master of his wee captivator's history; "and what in the name of all the furies do they want to do with you?"

"It will be a long story, but I must begin at the beginning, or you won't understand the situation," said Aileen.

"All right. Let's hear."

"About three centuries ago, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth—"

"Phew! that is beginning at the beginning!"

"In the time of the Huguenot persecution in France, a French Huguenot came over to seek a refuge in Ireland, who had lost all his estates, and been stripped of his title. He married an Irish lady, and in order to conceal himself more effectually from his enemies he took the name of his wife, and was known ever after as Jules Guillamore."

"I see."

"The lady was of good birth, but little wealth, having only one barren estate called Inchvarra. However, here they lived, and their descendants have always held Inchvarra Castle until this day; but strange to say, for two hundred years the real name of our French ancestor has been lost."

"Ay?"

"Ten years ago my brother Kenelm, who was the eldest of the family, quarrelled with papa and left Vara, never to be heard of since. Three months afterwards the cholera came to the village, and mamma took it while nursing the poor people, and died, and papa took the infection from her and died, too, so that none were left but Vara and me."

"By George! two little orphan babes!" muttered the listener.

"And then, Denis, our good, kind Denis, who was a distant cousin and had been papa's servant while he was in the army, took care of us, and kept the castle over our heads, and saved the old name from falling into dishonour. Oh, what would we have done without Denis!"

"Wish I had been handy!"

"And you don't know how happy we have been, Vara and I, leading our poor life together," pursued Aileen, her cheeks pale, and her eyes shining through tears, as the dear lost days came rushing back to her. "But it was too peaceful and sunny to last. One day old Denis told us that he had discovered that a certain great French property was going begging for heirs, and that he believed we were the nearest claimants. And so he was going to France with the old box of jewels that Jules Guillamore, the Huguenot, had brought with him when he made Ireland his country, to see about it, and meantime we were not to speak of his mission to any one, lest schemers might try to get a hold of our good fortune. And he went away, and the very day we were looking for his return the miscreant, Geoffrey Rochester, stole me away from Vara."

Then she detailed the circumstances of her abduction (concealing, however, the forced marriage), and when she had concluded she covered her face with her hands, and sobbed piteously.

"Oh, Vara, my darling! my heart's core! what are you doing without your Aileen?"

The sailor seized her hand and wrung it hard.

"By thunder!" swore he, mightily, "I'll see you through this plot, or I'll know why. Look on me as another Denis, Miss Guillamore—eh?" and he gave the little hand a tender patting, and laid it back in her lap.

Her eyes were glowing fit to turn any man's brain.

"I always heard that sailors had the noblest and

largest of hearts," she breathed, "and now I know it. Oh, sir, help me to get home to Vara, and I will adore your memory for ever."

"My memory?" echoed Captain Sherrard, with a queer half-smile. "Faith, I'd a deal rather—hump. Never mind me," seeing a flush which might be displeasure rising on the fair face opposite; "I'm a rough brute, and the compliments of ladies only upset me. Well, now to proceed to business. Seems to me that there Rochester has got an inkling of the fortune, and has made off with you hoping to get you to marry him—confound his impudence! Beg pardon, miss, but ain't that the lay of the land?"

"I fear it is," said Mrs. Rochester, with lovely modesty.

"But you'll see him to perdition—further off, that is, before you'll give in to him—eh?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And if it's any satisfaction to you for me to break the scoundrel's skull—"

"Oh, no, no! It would kill me ever to see him again! Let us get away before there is a chance of his return."

"All right. And what'll we do with the dark woman?"

"True—true! I had forgotten her!" replied the little plotter, in perplexity. "We must wait until she is well enough to be left."

"And as soon as that happens we'll go off in old Hunk's boat," said Sherrard, as coolly as if he were planning a pleasure-boat. "And since it's likely all hands here are bribed to keep a sharp lookout on you we'll keep the fun to ourselves."

"Yes," returned Aileen, demurely. "How far are we from land?"

"Hem—a matter of twenty miles or so."

"Twenty miles?" cried Aileen, aghast; "and can you row twenty miles without assistance?"

"Why not?" returned the invalid, surveying his muscular arms with complaisance. "I could run you over to land in four hours or so. You see, we're on Hag's Head, and the nearest shore is Sheerness. We'll have to go on a smooth day, though, so while 'Holland,' or whatever the blackamoor's name is, is on her beam-ends, I'll be getting things in trim, and we'll crowd sail the minute you cry 'all aboard'!"

"That will do," said Aileen, and with a sweet little smile she tripped away to her patient.

CHAPTER XIV.

ZOLANDE was indeed very ill. It was three days before she opened her eyes in consciousness of her surroundings—three days in which she raved of strange experiences in a manner which made the heart of the young girl who ministered to her grow faint with horror, and sometimes pity.

She could estimate now what must have been the depth of Zolande's hate towards her by the oft-repeated fact that she had once been all in all to Rochester, and had been forced to render service and respect to the usurper of her place.

But Aileen's conscientious little soul would not allow her to neglect for one moment the unfortunate being who, quite unconsciously to herself, was pouring forth the bitterest terms of vengeance and resentment against her, like volumes of burning lava from a volcano; on the contrary, she redoubled her exertions on her behalf, and would scarcely take the needed rest which her big friend below declared necessary for the preservation of her own health.

Since Aileen would on no account allow Captain Sherrard even to enter the invalid woman's presence to share her watch (and the little minx had her own reasons for keeping him out of earshot of those singular disclosures which Zolande's wild tongue was constantly making), he constituted himself "chief cook to the troupe," as he termed it, and exhausted his ingenuity in the concoction of delicate dishes out of next to nothing, in order to tempt the appetite of his little "Yellow Hair," as he loved to call her; and he surrounded her with pitch to his heart's content, so as to scare away infection, made her keep it in her pocket, tied a necklace of tarry hemp round her pretty white, fat neck (hope and happiness were bringing back all her dimples), fumigated her three or four times per day, made her take a walk round and round the balcony, hanging to his big arm, morning and evening, however wild the wind blew, and, in short, managed to be as nearly inseparable and indispensable as if he were in reality her brother.

You may be sure Aileen liked this very well.

The keeper of the lighthouse and his old wife, as well as Nathan the sailor, who had been left behind to wait on his master, kept a clear berth below, and beyond carrying each day's provisions up to Captain Sherrard's door left the fever-smitten strangers to their own devices.

"Blessed if it isn't the very thing I want," quoth the sturdy captain to his small fellow-conspirator. "Our chances of cribbing the old man's boat would be slim enough if they were

coming about us like human beings, but all the same I'd like to give that idiot Nathan one good kicking before we go."

It was his delight to go down on to the scanty strip of beach under the lighthouse and dig the big, fat clams out of the sand, or pick the limpets off the rocks, and haul the green lobsters from their hiding-places at low tide for Aileen; and it was really wonderful to see the banquets he would set out for her in his room, and how he would sit gloating with pleasure over every mouthful she swallowed, and lying in wait for some word to show which were her favourite dishes. And, of course, while he was down there it was quite natural for him to unfasten the boat from its moorings and pull out a little way, "just to see," as he said, in the old man's hearing, one day, "whether the fever had taken the pith out of his arms," and you may imagine how the captive girl's heart leaped with joy the day that he rowed under her window, and sang in a stentorian voice:

"To the West, to the West,
To the land of the free!"

Well, the time came when Zolande began to notice the gentle little figure which flitted to and fro from the tedious dawn to the weary dusk; to know the gentle little face which often bent over her with no shrinking in its eyes or fear of infection; to think of the gentle little hands which had been busy for her comfort all day long, whenever her little nurse was down on the big lion's skin by the bedside sleeping; to think, and to moan, and to sigh, as she tossed on her pillow, while the fair, lovely face shone up like a star in the night.

And tears, long denied that crushed and poisoned heart, began to rush from the lurid, dark eyes whenever she was alone, and a sadness so profound that no ray of light could visit her thin face fell upon her. But with it all she was out of danger.

"Come now," said Sherrard.

"What! while she can't move a hand to help herself?" cried Aileen, with righteous indignation. "Who's to cook her food for her if you go away, I'd like to know?"

"Dunno," returned the giant, meekly. "I'm a brute, ain't I, to think of such a thing? But I thought you were in a hurry to dodge rogue Rochester, sister Aileen."

"So I am," returned Aileen, sorely divided between fear and duty; "but," she added, heroically, "I must not leave Zolande any sooner than I would leave Vara, if she had been ill. There, go away, and don't bother!"

And out of all rhyme and reason she began to cry, as the yearnings of her heart rose up.

Captain Sherrard retired with a penitent air, and felt himself to be an overbearing brute for the next twelve hours, it never occurring to him to defend himself from the girl's reproaches by reminding her of the fact that he was acting solely for her welfare and to the utter demolition of his own affairs—as he should have reported himself in person long ago to the owners of the wrecked "Hesperides," and exonerated himself from all blame.

Aileen pursued her ministrations for another three days, and at the end of that time Zolande very quietly arose first in the morning, put on the garb of servitude, and said, in her usual deferential and quiet tones:

"Madame will permit me to return to my duties. I am well again."

Aileen's heart throbbed a good deal faster, but she turned her glad face away, only replying:

"Very well, Zolande; do what you can without fatiguing yourself."

So Zolande crept about, and found work in arranging the linen and general wardrobe of her young mistress, which had got considerably out of repair, and, though she was very weak, she showed herself quite strong enough to help herself.

"Can't we go to-night?" whispered Aileen, breathlessly, to her champion the next time they met.

"Well—had we better wait two or three days yet?" queried the sailor, sure to be cautious this time.

"Why? What's the hindrance now?"

"The—the—ain't the invalid too weak to be left?"

"No!" cried Aileen, with immense indignation; "do you suppose I should leave her if she was?"

"No, but I was afraid you'd think I'd want to leave her, and I am agreeable to locate in this here chimney-flue as long's you like, ye know."

"If you have repented of the puril of helping my escape, say so," flashed the young vixen, whom unlimited obedience and devotion had somewhat spoiled.

"Me repented?" echoed Sherrard, laughing, for he was much too simple and straightforward to suppose for a moment she was in earnest. "Come now, that's a jolly good joke! Maybe you'll be saying next I'm not your poor lost brother Kenelm, that you knew the first minute you ever clapped your eyes on!" and he roared with appreciation of his own wit.

"I don't know what or who you are, true enough," retorted the ungrateful young gipsy, trying hard not to cry; "and it's—not very kind of you to remind me just now how much I am indebted to a stranger, but please remember, sir, that I never asked you to put yourself to half the trouble you have been at on my account, and I wish—I wish I had never written that on the window-sill!" And down fell the tears in a flood, not at all because of the subject in hand, but simply because Miss Aileen's conscience was pricking her about leaving Zolande in that dreary place.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Captain Sherrard, getting red with dismay. "What have I said, dear? Don't, little Yellow-Hair—don't, my darling! What a lubber—a pig I am! There! there! What'll I do? what'll I do?" and he looked about him and at his afflited in helpless misery.

If he did not take the little hedge-hog in his arms after the manner of no brother in this juncture, was not because he did not want to, but only because he dare not.

At last Aileen, feeling a good deal better after her shower, dried her eyes, and condescended to make herself intelligible, and the end of it was that all should be ready that night.

• • • • •

"Hist! who's that?"

"It's Yellow Hair. Oh, be quiet; I'm so frightened!"

"Look out for the rocks there, or you'll trip. Here's my hand. All right—in with you! Now we're off, pot—at least, sis! Hip! hip—"

"For goodness' sake hush, or they'll hear you! Are you mad, sir? Oh, how my heart's jumping! And how calm the water is! Good-bye, Hag's head! Good-bye, Kenelm. Bow for your life—I'd die if I were taken back!"

"Ham! Not a bit of fear, lovely. The old chap's other boat's as full of holes as a nutmeg grater."

"What! his new boat? Oh, you dear wicked old brother! Wish you were my brother, Kenelm!"

"Flog me, if I can say the same! I'd rather—"

"Look! look! who's that? Who's that on the balcony? Zolande!"

"Yes, Zolande!"

Zolande, under the flooding moonlight, with her long black hair flung back, and her crimson draperies flying, and her pallid face gleaming, as she lifts her bare arms, and waves them towards the retreating boat.

Not in malediction—ah, no! for listen to the words that come faintly to the young girl over the glistening water.

"Good wishes! good wishes! The heart of the poor slave go with thee, sweet madame, who saved an enemy's life!"

And little Aileen, with a glad bound of her loving and honest heart, tore the white scarf from her neck and waved it in an amicable farewell as long as she could distinguish the red shawl and the pale face of her conquered foe.

CHAPTER XV.

CHRISTABEL SNOWE! Vara gazed at her brother as if stunned. For an instant she thought he was jesting; that passed, and terror seized her.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Kenelm, wonder-struck by the expression of her countenance.

"My name is Christabel Snowe—she called me that!"

"You? Great Heavens—you, Vara?"

"Yes, Kenelm, yes! My heart! what is this?"

"And she—Mrs. St. Columb called you that?"

"Yes, Kenelm! What does it mean?"

The young girl's heart was torn between doubts and faith—ruthless memory flashing before her eyes significant pictures—love and gratitude nobly striving to explain them away.

"Soh!" hissed Kenelm; "your friend and my enemy are one!"

"No, no, Heaven forbid!" sobbed Vara, casting her doubts passionately away. It is but a coincidence! Why should she give me her own name? Come and see her. She is too noble to be a deceiver."

"That will I. Let us go."

They left the singer in a whirl of lark-like trills, and hurried to the private saloon.

There they learned from Mrs. St. Columb's footman that the lady, hearing from Lord John of Miss Snowe's brother having joined her in her box, had returned home without waiting, and begged them to follow at their convenience, as the carriage had been sent back for them.

"Let us follow, them," said Kenelm, and his violet eyes blazed, while his lips grew white and thin under their fleshy moustache. It would seem as if he had turned avenger.

He drew his sister's small hand tightly towards his arm, and so holding it they hastened down to



[AILEEN'S PROTECTOR.]

the grand entrance, where upon the pavement stood a mixed throng waiting to see the

Gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls
of the ladies' toilets as they floated down to their carriages.

The brother and sister crossed the wide pavement in the full stream of the brilliant arch of light which surmounted the "box-entrance" of the opera; the spectators eagerly eyed them, but in respectful silence, as the footman flung open the door of the gorgeous brougham.

Suddenly there was a puff of light smoke—a report—a flash—and Vara, shrieking, threw her arms about Kenelm.

His hat had fallen to the ground, it was picked up by a dozen hands, and presented to him. As he glanced at it a slight smile curled his lip, and he showed a policeman at his side a bullet-hole through the hat.

A howl of rage arose from the mob; there was a surging about the spot where the shot had been fired; and the rage increased tenfold when Vara, raising her agitated face, uttered a piercing scream and pointed across the street to an archway, under which a man was just vanishing.

A rush to the archway pell-mell by the mob, jostling, hustling, shouting, tripping each other all the way, after the manner of mobs.

Meanwhile, Vara, horror-stricken, clung to her brother, uttering shriek after shriek, and well nigh expiring.

"Home," said Kenelm to the stupefied coachman, and lifting his sister in his arms he placed her in the carriage, sprang in after her, and shut the door.

The carriage threaded its way slowly through the crush to Mrs. St. Columb's mansion.

Kenelm soothed the agitated girl by every device, and with tenderest affection strove to reassure her; but for some time his efforts were almost unavailing.

With her hands to her throat, and a convulsed expression sculptured on her features, she uttered choking sighs, while her slight frame shuddered with a violence it was ill able to sustain.

But at last he prevailed upon her to speak.

"Alas, Kenelm!" said she, faintly, "I have made a terrible discovery."

"Hush, hush, my sweet sister! Do not speak of anything terrible. I am unhurt, and let us both thank Heaven for it."

"Thank Heaven, indeed! But, oh, I am not mistaken! I saw his face so plainly—dark and cruel! the same face which followed the corpse of Denia—the murderer—the assassin!"

"Heavens! What are you saying, Vara? May you not be mistaken?"

"Ah, no!" shivered Vara, large tears rolling down her bleached cheeks; "I saw his face too well that day! Is it not imprinted upon my memory in lines of fire? His eyes looked into mine that awful day as they did to-night."

"But, my dearest girl, there were so many looking at us—"

"I saw only him—he raised his pistol, and before I could scream out he had fired—and then I saw him flying across the street, under the horses, and behind the carriages.

Kenelm urged no more. Presently he asked, in a singular tone:

"Were you ill before your new friend got hold of you?"

"Oh, yes," answered Vara; "I have never been the same since I lost Aileen."

"And it was three weeks from the time Aileen disappeared that Mrs. St. Columb found you in Clonachen, and befriended you?"

"Yes. And, oh! when I think of all her kindness—"

"Ay, but we'll think of something else just now. I want to know as much as possible before I have the honour of meeting your earth-angel. I am curious about this illness of yours—curious to know if it resembles in any way my own. What do you feel, dear Vara?"

She sighed wearily.

"Of what use can it be, dear brother, to detail symptoms to you? You are not a physician!"

"No, but I may be of more use to you than a physician."

She yielded, though with visible reluctance, to speak of her sufferings.

"At first, all the time I was with Mrs. St. Columb in Clonachen, I had the most terrible nights. At that time I believed Aileen was drowned, you know. Well, there chanced to be a lovely pale-green curtain of satin hanging all round my bed chamber, and whenever I lay down to sleep the colour green haunted me, and seemed to penetrate through my whole system. And I dreamed of Aileen's pale, drowned form through depths of fearful green water;

and gradually a monster seemed to grow out of the lifeless body of my beautiful darling, and it would come up out of those depths and lean upon my chest with green eyes glaring into mine, and its body covered with a living green phosphorescence, coming nearer—nearer, until its emerald locks wrapped about me like the long sea-weed that fringes the rocks at Inchvarra, and its hooked claws tore at my chest."

She uttered these strange sentences slowly, and like one wrapped in a loathsome dream, and paused with affrighted eyes fixed on vacancy.

"Go on," said her brother.

He was calm and apparently unmoved, but his face was pale as death.

"Then," continued Vara, rousing herself, "I would awake in the horrors of strangulation, and walk about the room until I was somewhat relieved. Each morning I rose as exhausted as if I had walked all night, and my days were passed in trying to gather strength to pass the next night in my abhorred chamber. At last the colour, green, had such an effect upon me that when we came to England I begged Mrs. St. Columb to change the colours in my room. Since then my symptoms are wholly changed. Now my sleep is perfectly dreamless, but when I awake in the morning I am unable to lift a finger. I never summon strength enough to dress until my maid has been in the room some time fanning and applying restoratives to me, with the windows thrown wide as though I were in a shower. Then each day I become weaker, until every step is painful exertion, and every motion exhausts me. Kenelm, these are my sufferings, I trust you do not suffer so deeply!"

For a time Kenelm was silent. With his sister's hand held close in his he pondered and seemed unwilling to speak.

At length he began in a low, careful voice to describe these sensations:

"From the virile force and elastic strength of perfect health, which the wildest excesses could not impair, to gradual falling off in vigour—a daily decrease in animal spirits, appetite, and activity; sleepless nights; a continual fulness in the brain; a perpetual fever of thirst and excitement; a hurried pulse; an impaired vision; a dull pain growing, growing, day by day like cancer in the stomach—these have been the symptoms of my disease, until now I am so weak that I cannot walk a quarter of a mile, and almost every night am afflicted with what my physician calls 'epileptic fits.' I am told that I shall in a short time die insane."

"Great Heaven! Kenelm, what have we done that Providence should doom us so?"

"How long have you been ill, Vara?"

"Three months."

"And I have been ill three months—Aileen has been lost three months—Denia has been murdered three months; and all Guillamores!"

"What—what do you mean?"

"All Guillamores, Vara, and a French inheritance advertising for heirs. Not Providence, sister, but wickedness!"

"Kenelm, you terrify me! Do you suppose—"

"That there is a human vampire at work sucking the life out of us all."

(To be continued.)



WHEN THE SHIP COMES HOME.

CHAPTER I.

Alas ! the brain is too oft doomed to bear
The gripes of poverty and stings of care.

Pope.

WHEN Mr. Edward Temple, in the very prime of his manhood, had been stricken down with one of those inexplicable and nameless illnesses which come without warning and end perhaps in a few hours, and was carried off to the great valley of rest, he left his wife and two daughters almost totally unprovided for.

There was a son, a young athlete and scholar, but he had long left home, following the bent of his restless nature and seeking his fortune abroad, and news of him came seldom and at long intervals.

Mr. Temple belonged to a good family—old English gentlefolk—but he was a younger son and had had to shift for himself. He had made the great mistake that too many make in not providing for a rainy day, and so when he died his only legacy, besides the lease of the house and its furniture, was his debts, and they would have swallowed up the poor widow's furniture had not the elder members of Mr. Temple's family come forward and saved it. He had had very little intercourse with his family in life, but death brings even foes together, and the Temples came, willing to forget his faults now that they were to be stoned for and pay a last tribute to his memory.

But family assistance never extends beyond the limits of actual necessity. Generosity is a virtue found only in friends; and one's relations are not one's friends, nor are friends one's relations. The now sadly melancholy house at Kennington was saved, with its furniture. A decent funeral for the deceased, mourning for the bereaved widow and her daughters were provided, and a tablet erected to the memory of her husband in a shaded corner of Brompton Cemetery, and then the Temples thought they had done sufficient and felt as if they had been magnanimous. Mrs. Temple's own people did the rest, such as the rest was.

They offered to pay the premium for Ellen, Mrs. Temple's eldest daughter, to learn the business of a first-class milliner. It paid so much better and was so very far more certain than music-teaching or being children's governess, and Miss Ellen Temple was gifted with too much of her father's practical common sense not to admit the truth of that and consent to learn millinery, hoping that her superior education would be the means of her advancement at no very distant date.

Something less than twenty pounds was then

[A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.]

given to the widow, and she was left to fight her battle against the miseries of poverty.

A cheque sent by the firm of which Mr. Edward Temple had been manager for so many years went far towards helping the widow over the stile, the first in her long lane of troubles. But at best it meant stint. Every shilling was parted with reluctantly, and the cost of a day's food was gone minutely before it was purchased. There were no six-o'clock dinners now. The trim little servant maid was gone, and the second daughter, Amy, taken from the preparatory school which she had attended, and together with the aid of a charwoman who came once a week they did the work of the house.

The sad and silent hours of evening that came while waiting for Ellen to come home Mrs. Temple spent in teaching Amy, when the bitterness of her great sorrow had sufficiently worn off to give her stunned senses some of their old independence of action.

Had she had house-rent to pay it would simply have been utter destitution. As it was the struggle to live and keep out of debt soon made itself felt, and by degrees signs of genteel poverty made themselves apparent. One of these signs told its dire, sad tale to the world. A card crept into the parlour window, "Apartments, furnished." That was the first sign of distress the neighbours had seen or suspected; they guessed the rest then, and some pity was felt for the quiet, ladylike person who had seemed so happy and comfortable and well-to-do until the shadow of the pall came darkening the sunlight of her existence.

Poor Mrs. Temple found letting apartments a troublesome and unpleasant business. Sometimes the rooms would be empty for six or eight weeks, and then taken at an hour's notice by a couple from the country who seemed to live by mysterious means, and when in arrear of more than one month's rent of them would walk out one morning and forget to return for the shabby box, which, when examined, was found to be empty; the female's wardrobe being scanty and the weather anything but warm, she had found no difficulty in putting all on her back.

Other lodgers came, bringing with them a large family of small and unruly children, and as Mrs. Temple held the house on a repairing lease she found that even by getting her rent regularly she would be out of pocket, so the rooms were preferred empty than left open to wholesale destruction.

Never in the whole course of her married life had Mrs. Temple's temper been so sorely tried as it had been by her lodgers during the first nine months of her widowhood. No sooner was any one comfortably

settled and there seemed a possibility of going along pleasantly, than a change occurring in their circumstances—sometimes the change was for the better, more often for the worse—would cause them to leave at a week's notice. Those who could pay were an endless trouble, as a rule. Late risers kept late company and wanted attendance till within ten minutes of their bedtimes. Some had been quiet and content, and no trouble; they as a rule were people who had suffered like Mrs. Temple, and couldn't always pay.

So, as the months went on, and the mourning was getting brown and threadbare, and the slender resources were becoming less and less, and Mrs. Temple's heart sank very low indeed, there came a quiet elderly man, who, impressed by the cleanliness and the distinctly unlodging-house appearance of both residence and mistress, took the second-floor on the terms asked for a permanency. He wanted gas and boot-cleaning, he said, and very little attention and that only on Sunday.

His name was Robert Joyce and his profession the law. He was connected with an eminent firm, and had a private connexion of his own, and his daily habits are thus summed up, and perhaps his character too: Quiet, reticent, solitary, and regular always as the hours that came round. Mrs. Temple thanked Providence for sending her such a lodger. They seldom saw each other, and then only to pass the usual compliments, nothing more.

Ellen Temple was in receipt of a salary now and paid her own bus fare morning and night, and bought those "little extras" which she deemed necessary to the welfare of her position in the great millinery house of Oxford Street.

But still the strictest economy was practised at home even now, and though there was no card in the window, Mrs. Temple had still a portion of the house to let. But she advertized, and many as the applicants were it was a long time before she met with any one suitable. A second lodger came at last—a young man with almost flaxen-coloured hair, broad, white face, and short, bushy, straw-coloured beard and moustache. He had the faintest foreign accent, and a quiet, deliberate, cautious way that stamped him of Saxon origin at once.

He wanted partial board and one good room. Mrs. Temple rather liked him, he was so precise, so straight-laced in his white linen and long-skirted frock coat and black scarf, his small gloved hands and fragile boots. Looking at him at first sight, you would unconsciously miss much of the powerful breadth of his chest and back, made broader still by the high, straight cut of his shoulders.

His references were good, and terms being agreed upon, Mr. Charles Ruhl—Ruhl was the name he gave, and Mrs. Temple at once concluded he was German—became not only an inmate of the dull house at Kennington, but very shortly like one of the family.

He was the kind of man to make way amongst strangers. He talked well, sang with that vivacity and musical, ringing voice so often found among Germans, and played the piano as much from ear as music, though he did it well. Add to this a tireless willingness to please, or perform any little service for those about him, and there is nothing strange in the fact that he should very soon become a favourite.

He spoke French exceedingly well, as a limitless number of Germans do, and was a scholar in his native tongue, though he had lived over fifteen years in England. Amy, always impulsive, and a little bit masculine, liked him, and the childish affection increased when he grew more familiar, and his tender, brotherly way won her young love. He helped her in her studies, played and sang to her, made himself her companion and playfellow, took her for evening strolls, and altogether became a bright acquisition to the dull home and the fatherless child who never knew the want of friends until poverty came.

With Ellen Temple Mr. Charles Ruhl was strangely subdued. He rarely spoke of her when absent, after the first week or so. He seemed to regard her as entirely a superior being, and he was almost servile in his attention to her during the quiet evenings at home.

"Your daughter, Miss Ellen, will make a very lovely woman, Mrs. Temple," he had said after the second morning they had met, "a splendid, queenly woman too, and she is very clever."

He never tired of hearing her sing or play, and he was always silent when she talked. In time to come, when the evenings were drawing in, he took to escorting her home, sometimes lingering amongst the shops by the way and purchasing little trifles, which she accepted in a sisterly way and saw no harm in it, for he was so much like one of the family. Amy called him Charley, Ellen spoke of him as Charles, and Mrs. Temple had dropped unconsciously into the way of calling him Ruhl simply.

"It is well for me I found a home at last," he said, with a sigh of happy contentment, when the family were enjoying an evening's music, "for I have none save this and no friends in this country save you all here. Heaven be thanked! and may I never lose you."

There was a curiously old, reflective look and tone upon him then. He had deep reflective moods at times, and Ellen, watching him closely, wondered what great trouble there was behind that almost radiant smile.

The second year of Mrs. Edward Temple's widowhood brought something like the old tranquillity to the dull old house at Kennington. Ellen's elegant presence, her refined taste and superior education had brought her the advancement she had dreamed of in the first few months of her novitiate drudgery. She was a favourite with the distinguished patrons of the firm, as well as the heads of the firm, who paid her a liberal salary and thought her an acquisition.

But she had to dress now with less regard to her own means than to the effect from a business point of view. To be constantly in the fashion was a duty she owed to her employers, who were wise enough to prefer their goods being displayed on such a model as Miss Temple to those imperfect, hard-faced waxon and cardboard dummies.

It is possible that had Ellen not been fortunate enough to hold a superior position in the firm she would never have remained amongst the rank and file. She was more contented now, though her duties caused her a tinge of mortification sometimes, and those times were when she had to wait upon ladies at their own residences. The ladies sometimes forgot that they were ladies, and behaved in an overbearing, upstart, contemptuous way which would disgrace any true-hearted Englishwoman.

But Ellen used to think of her helpless young sister at home, and the widowed mother dependent upon the dull house and the help that was accorded her; so she used to pocket her indignation and play the brave little woman that she was.

Charles Ruhl used to sit with a deep light in his eyes and a hard, grim smile on his locked mouth when Ellen used to tell these things, more for the amusement of her mother than as a complaint, but Ruhl saw deeper down into her secret heart than any of the household would ever suppose.

"I know," he said, on one of these occasions, "how you must hate those people. Because you feel yourself their equal in birth and education, which you are, and we all know how proud Ladybird is, don't we, mamma?"

He had a playful, affectionate way of saying "Mamma" to Mrs. Temple that nearly always won a smile from her in response.

"Indeed we do, Charles."

He was "Charles" now. They had ceased to think of him as a lodger any longer.

"But Ellen's life is an easier one than it would have been had she taken to teaching."

"She could never do that. Could you, princess?" Ruhl answered, fixing his steady blue eyes upon her, and she thought what a frank, handsome fellow he was.

"No," she said, simply. "I should kill the children in a fit of impatient desperation, and myself too."

"The children I should not mind, but yourself, princess—well—I don't think we could do without you. You shall be a lady some day—a fine lady, too," he went on, in a half-candid, half-playful way.

"Indeed! When, may I ask?" said Ellen, looking her dimpled chin in her dainty hand, and looking up at him with her lustrous dark eyes sparkling with amusement. "When, Mr. Prophet?"

"When the ship comes home," answered Charles Ruhl, averting his eyes for once.

"Whose ship?" asked Ellen.

Amy was standing by Ruhl's side, with his arm round her waist, her face—red, round, and babyish yet—turned towards her sister, but she looked down at Charles now with a straight, searching glance, when Ellen, after a moment's hesitation on his part, repeated the question:

"Whose ship?"

"Mine," he answered, with a slow, subdued emphasis, and glancing up with his white face graver than they had ever seen it.

Amy's eyes dropped, their long lashes threw a shadow on her cheeks, on which the colour slowly rose and brightened, but unnoticed. She was only a child—a child as yet no purpose, no thought above her own whims, no under-current in her nature—at least, so they thought who, so very little older, deemed themselves so very, very much wiser.

The effect of Charles Ruhl's answer was strange though momentary. Mrs. Temple fixed her glance upon him; her face wore the light of a sudden hope, a newly born pleasure. Ellen looked thoughtful, and then remembering that they were always playing courtesies she laughed outright.

"It's as well to have good expectations," she said. "But come, is the ship launched yet?"

"Launched!" repeated Ruhl, pondering like one working out a proposition. "Launched? Yes; long ago and laden, but she wants a cool, dauntless commander, a fearless, experienced pilot, to take her safely through. There are straits and gulfs, rocks and breakers and shoals, storms and tempests, ruled by the powerful hand of Providence. All these dangers stand in her way, princess. But she may have a calm sky, a tranquil sea and a fair, friendly wind; she may weather the straits and ride safely over the breakers—who shall say?—and ride proudly at anchor for the rest of her days."

"What is she called?" asked Ellen.

"Fortune," was the reply.

"Then I shall pray that your good ship 'Fortune' make a speedy voyage, for if when the ship comes home I am to be a fine lady I pray that it will make haste," she continued, with a flush on her face and a light in her eyes that too plainly showed her heart's fondest desire.

"People's ships don't always come home," said Amy, suddenly, with a kind of grim consolation in the thought. "Ma was always saying what she would do when her ship arrived, but I suppose it's gone down long ago, and so will yours, perhaps."

Charles Ruhl laughed outright at the impetuosity of Miss Amy.

"Some people only use the words for the sake of it, little one," he said, "and with no hope of ever seeing it arrive. But I have a ship launched. It may get wrecked, truly, my black-eyed prophetess, but, if it do, all hands and the commander will get wrecked too inevitably, and lost beyond all redemption."

"Who is its commander?" asked Amy, struck by the very grave earnestness of Charles's mien.

"I am."

"Then I hope it won't get wrecked," she said, "and, if it do, its commander ought to have some sort of life-belt or spar at hand for him to clutch to save himself when he sees that all else is lost. Oh, I wish I were a man! I'd let them see whether I wouldn't live even by my very eyelashes, and I would defy every one until I gained my end, whatever that is, I took in hand."

Amy was given to breaking out this way now and then. There was much of her brother's fierce, wayward spirit intensified in this robust, broad-shouldered child, whose splendid, prematurely developed limb-power made her strikingly noticeable, though there

were those who for the want of knowing better, or perhaps for the want of a little of that Christian virtue, charitableness, called her "Fatty."

Charles Ruhl seemed most struck by this outburst. He looked up into her round face with its heightened colour and contemplated her as if he had but just perceived the signs of a great character, almost eccentric, just budding into maturity, and by the inner light in her eyes it was just possible that he was then weighing her words.

Ellen had half a mind to question Charles Ruhl about his future prospects very earnestly, but he was strangely reticent upon all personal matters. He had told them that relations in London he had none.

"And as to those in Germany," he said, with a contemptuous laugh, "they are older than I, and so stand prior in the claim to the barony, which I believe is held by an uncle or grandmother's cousin, or some one; as if an English shopkeeper couldn't buy up half a dozen German barons and their supply them with pocket-money."

He always spoke lightly of his country and contemptuously of the poverty-stricken nobles. But that he was a young man of really good extraction had been proved by correspondence in his possession and by the stamp of the man.

His position in London was not a bad one. Steady, sober, reliable, clever at figures, a splendid business capacity and invaluable when there was much foreign correspondence, there can be no wonder that he was petted and permitted to hold an almost independent position in the firm of Messrs. Saxon, Coburg and Co., at a salary of nearly two hundred a year.

He was careful with his money without being mean; never a week passed without he brought some little present for Amy, whom he spoiled and petted like a younger sister. Ellen he almost quite supplied in gloves, and once a week at least he either brought tickets or paid for them all to go to the theatre.

The members of the family who honoured Mrs. Temple with a visit now and then saw and liked him. The Temples heard of him, and a whole history of his sayings and doings with his photograph had been sent out to Edward, who when next heard of had traversed some hundreds of miles through the bush and who said their journey had only just begun.

When Charles Ruhl retired to rest on this particular night after the quiet, homely gossip which had taken the place of the music, he became moodily thoughtful when in the precincts of his own room. Despite the ready smile and his lighthearted way in company, he was a deep thinker. Many of his leisure hours were devoted to study; even now to be above most men was his aim, and he had the strong will to make him succeed.

He went about his room like one holding a mental monologue. His head was bent, one hand was thrust idly into his trousers pocket, the other in the breast of his vest. His whole mien was that of deep, meditative study, not quite devoid of doubt and perplexity, judging by the various shadows that passed and repassed over his broad white forehead, so prominent and heavy that his eyebrows jutted out over his eyes, shading them with a deep, impene- trable dusk.

Pausing at length before the chimney, and with a quiet kind of grim smile on his face, Charles Ruhl took a pencil from his waistcoat pocket, tore a blank half-sheet of a little book, and pencilled thereon in a bold round hand the following extracts from Miss Amy's impetuous speech:

"The commander ought to have some sort of life-belt or spar at hand ready to clutch to save himself when he sees that everything is lost; when his life-ship is wrecked at last."

Whatever significance these words bore on paper, or however much greater that significance was on paper, it is hard to say. But for some time did Charles contemplate them in silence and finally he pinned the pencilled strip to the wall-paper above his fireplace, and, adding a few remarks to an irregularly kept diary or journal, he went to bed. Soon at peace in sleep—troulli too in his dreams, to judge by the smile that wreathed his lips.

The next day was Sunday, and he took Ellen and Amy to church, but his mind wandered from the service; when he opened the prayer-book his mind was mentally reading that strip of paper pinned up on the wall-paper above the mantel at home.

That quiet evening's gossip, which had taken such a serious turn, had opened up a new channel of thoughts and reflection for him. He had seen then Ellen Temple's pride and ambition, he knew the bent of her mind. She must be a lady even at a cost. Her present position was preferable to a needy marriage. Her husband must be a man of some standing, some wealth; even though she loved him dearly these were considerations she would never overlook even at her heart's sacrifice.

Charles Ruhl became disquieted after he had come to this conclusion. He went earlier to business, and came home later, and while Amy was sitting studying her German lessons he would sit by and work unceasingly at balance sheets, tables of discount, or foreign bonds, due or overdue, in the hands of the firm of Messrs. Saxon, Coburg and Co. Ellen, coming home unexpectedly early one night, found him plodding on over sheets of, to her, mysterious figures.

Peeping over his shoulder with a woman's curiosity, she caught sight of a name that seemed to interest her very much, or perhaps only struck her from its aristocratic sound.

"Francis Craythorpe Hopetown! Why, what can your firm have to do with those people?"

"Do you know them, then, princess?" asked Charles, looking up at her in some surprise.

"Mrs. Hopetown is a customer of ours. I have waited on her twice."

"Mrs? Oh, that's another matter. I was thinking only of this young spark, sole heir to Mr. Hopetown's immense property. Heavens! some people are born to revel in riches. Not only does he come into nearly a million of money, but there is only one life between him and a baronetcy, with fifteen thousand a-year."

"How do you come to know so much, pray?"

"His late uncle was connected with our firm, who have now to pay in to this young fellow's account over five thousand a-year, sometimes more, and if he chose to come into the firm himself a little it would be eight thousand. John Hopetown was the moneyed sleeping partner of our place, and built our two best ships, the 'Syren' and the 'Merle,' and I have to do this young swell's business for him at a salary of two hundred. Isn't it too bad?"

"Well, he must have something, I suppose, for the risk of his capital," answered Ellen. "Is he very young?"

"Yes, under age; but a man of the world for all that, and keeps his horses and his yacht and the rest of it. I am rather fond of hunting up the pedigree of his family. There is a mystery somewhere. I know that if ever his cousin, the son of John Hopetown, turns up, half the fortune goes to him at once. I cannot find out what has become of him or why he left the country, but I shall some day," Ruhl went on, with a curious sort of self-confidence that in most people would seem like boastful vanity.

"Dear me, I am quite interested," said Ellen, with a deep blush on her cheeks.

"I will tell you the story some day, when I have got it more perfect than I have at present. I have never till now had the opportunity to go into confidential documents of the firm till now. When I have learned more you shall know all; for the present even our princess must be satisfied."

That was said in Charles Ruhl's playful way, but Ellen knew he did not mean to say another word just then, and the subject dropped.

"May I come and visit you as usual to-morrow night?" he asked.

"Yes, only don't come too early. Most likely I shall be late to-morrow."

"What do you call late?"

"Half-past nine," she said, but not until she had considered well.

Charles said laughingly that half-past nine was early; but in case of accidents he was at his post twenty minutes before that time, and waited till a quarter to ten. Then he knocked at the side door of her establishment, and made inquiries. He was known there as the friend of the family, and they answered him civilly that Miss Temple had been gone since half-past eight, and he turned away with a strange feeling of misgiving at his heart.

Moodily and wondering, he strolled through the park and was, about to turn up the steps at the foot of the Duke of York's column when two figures attracted his attention, one especially—the figure of a lady in earnest conversation with a gentleman. The figure was Ellen's.

With the blood rushing into his head in a whirl, and everything around him seeming to become moveable and unsteady, he stepped forward to speak, and then recoiled, as if his very heart had stopped, and, after passing his hand over his broad, white forehead he gasped out:

"Ellen with Francis Hopetown, and here!"

CHAPTER II.

Oh, shame to manhood, shall one daring boy
The scheme of all our happiness destroy?

When streaming tears his faded cheeks be-
dewed;

But vain his tears, his arts are vain to
move.

Pope.

FRANCIS CRAYTHORPE HOPETOWN was one of the few really elegant young men we meet with now and then; as tall, if not a shade taller, than Ruhl, with-

out any of his bulk, his figure, being slim and full of litho grace and supple power, was of the two most commanding.

He looked a mere boy in face, hairless, but for a fair moustache, still in its tender infancy. He had full red lips, and an unusual complexion, tanned, or more properly speaking tinted just enough by exposure to a continental sun and healthy physical exercise to be attractive. One glance at Francis Hopetown would convince the most unskilled man in such matters that they beheld a perfect gentleman, and there is something in our English perfect gentleman that is unmistakeable all over the world.

Francis, or Frank, as he was always called, having had neither maternal nor paternal control since his infancy, for Mrs. Hopetown of the present was only a stepmother, was self-willed and thoughtless, but not vicious. He had been so reared in the lap of luxury and so accustomed to the free use of money that luxuries were to him common necessities, and though he spent his money freely he spent it with care.

He had gone through the ordeal of dissipation by mixing with the dissipated, the betting, horse-racing profligates, and come out unscathed. In his wildest moments he had never compromised a second year's income (the income that he received during his minority). He had a curious self-willed way of doing just as he liked, and he liked as a rule to do exactly the opposite to what those who preyed upon him wanted.

He was a little eccentric, too, leaving home sometimes and not turning up again amongst his friends or relatives for months. Any remonstrance only roused his fiery temper, and it was a dangerous, unreasonable temper when aroused.

He had first seen Ellen when she called upon Mrs. Temple at her house in Hyde Park Gardens. She had arrived in an unpretentious four-wheel cab, with a "boy in buttons" on the box belonging to the firm, and who was sent to carry the somewhat large and clumsy packages containing dresses for Mrs. Hopetown's approval.

Frank, who was ascending the house steps at the moment, watched her alight in wonder. He thought her a very beautiful creature, and that she must be a lady friend, and he nearly committed himself by saluting her, which he would have done had not a timid restraint made her pause at the bottom of the steps while he was let in. But he lingered about the dining-room door to get a second peep at her as she passed on her way upstairs to Mrs. Hopetown's boudoir. Perhaps he had seen as beautiful girls—as graceful and elegant, too—but, with that perversity of human nature which will be infatuated by a look, a movement, a glance of the eye, or a smile, he was infatuated with Miss Temple, and declared inwardly that he had never, never met any one to equal "that splendid creature."

Waiting a sufficient length of time for his stepmother to be in the act of trying on a dress, he ascended the stairs and pretending ignorance as to any one being there besides Mrs. Hopetown, he knocked at the door and called out:

"May I come in?"

Mrs. Hopetown, vain to the very core, and always fond of flattery, called to him to wait just a minute, and then she let him in. He was to admire the dress, and he feigned to do so, though his glance was riveted upon the distinguished girl who had brought him.

He paid his stepmother so many compliments that he nearly exhausted the vocabulary of eulogies, and the meanwhile listened attentively to Ellen Temple's pretty, well-trained voice.

She spoke with the accent and diction of a well-bred lady, and whenever she explained materials or trimmings with French names her pronunciation of them was perfect.

He did not leave the room until he learned that Miss Temple would call again on the second day following, and that Mrs. Hopetown would drive round in the morning. He mentally resolved to be unusually polite and drive round with her, and promised himself the extreme pleasure of seeing the young lady when she paid her next visit.

He kept his promise to himself, his stepmother wondered at his sudden attention, never suspecting the real cause, for Frank was proverbially not a ladies' man. The more he saw of Ellen Temple the more he was smitten, and he determined to know her.

"She is a lady," he said, inwardly, "and one of no mean origin, whatever may be the circumstances that have compelled her to accept the position she now holds."

How to get at her was for the time a simple poser. He saw and instinctively felt that to adopt the ordinary course of waiting about for a chance meeting and then following her up would not answer.

"She is not one of that sort," he mentally argued. "I can imagine the look those glorious eyes would give any fellow daring to accost her in the streets."

But Chance, that great mischief-maker, did for him what he partially feared he never should accomplish. She called one day by appointment. Mrs. Hopetown had just gone out, but would return in a quarter of an hour or less. Would Miss Temple kindly wait? Miss Temple assented, and was shown into a reception-room. Frank heard of it and strolled in to make apologies for his stepmother's absence.

"She was called away to see Lady Tragley," he said, "who has a cold or an ache in her little finger and has alarmed all her friends within a radius of ten miles."

Miss Temple said she could wait, and smiled at the way Mr. Hopetown spoke of her ladyship's illness. By a little skilful maneuvering Frank then drew Ellen into conversation by making her forget that she was on an errand of business and treating her in an open, boyish way as if she were a friend.

Thus the fifteen minutes passed unnoticed by her. But Mr. Frank knew that his stepmother was as likely to be an hour. He took Miss Temple from one subject to another, showing her in a scrap-book places he had visited, until they talked of music, which reminded him that there was a small piano in the room. He found a sheet of new music, and, pretending he had not heard it, begged Miss Temple to try and render it.

It would kill the time, he said, and oblige him, for he wished to send the music to a lady friend, and did not care to do so until he had heard it.

Ellen, in no way displeased to display her instrumental powers, obliged him.

She played it well, almost perfectly, and he was in raptures.

She had only just finished when Mrs. Hopetown's knock was heard. Ellen left the piano-stool, and Frank, rolling up the sheet of music, turned and took Miss Temple by the hand.

"Thank you," he said, smiling down at her a look full of eloquence and admiration. "I shall treasure this piece of music, Miss Temple, and live in hopes that I shall hear you play it again before long. You have given me great pleasure, pray accept my thanks," and gently pressing her hand he went out of the room as his stepmother crossed the hall.

Frank Hopetown's delight was simply ecstasy. He felt he was walking on air. He could have sung or danced, or given way to any wild extravagance, so unbounded was his joy. But he went to his own room, his sanctum sanctorum, and lit a cigar, and, throwing himself full length on the couch, gave way to a luxurious reverie, in which Ellen Temple figured most.

His intended course of future action was soon laid out, and the second evening following he commenced operations.

He waited in sight of the establishment until he saw Miss Temple come out. He followed her then at a respectful distance until he thought that they were safe from prying eyes. Then he quickened his pace until he had passed her, when he turned, affected to have suddenly recognized her, and raised his hat.

Miss Temple could do nothing less than acknowledge such attention, and he, taking advantage of this little encouragement, walked on beside her, and began a conversation. That is how they had first met. They had come together in a similar way since then, until one evening Frank boldly asked Ellen to meet him.

She hesitated, and then refused. He urged her, pressed his suit in such a manner that she hesitated again, and they say that she who hesitates once is lost, and, scarcely knowing what she did, Ellen reluctantly gave her consent.

That was the meeting Charles Ruhl had witnessed. Ellen had kept her word as a lady, but cool reflection had suggested the propriety of telling Mr. Hopetown that these clandestine meetings must cease. When she met him, however, her resolution gave way. He was so inexpressibly tender, so respectful, and yet ardent, she saw that his pleasure was real, and it gave her feelings akin to pleasure to be noticed by such a man as Francis Craythorpe Hopetown.

"I cannot stay, Mr. Hopetown," she had said, when they met, "at least, not to-night. Some one will come from home to meet me, and I dare not be late."

"I will not keep you late, Miss Temple," he answered, in a tone that sent a thrill through her, "but you will not leave me before I have just said a word to you. You will take a little walk with me, will you not?"

"It must be a very short one, then, Mr. Hopetown."

"A short one, then, but I cannot lose you yet." He spoke with an earnestness of manner that could not be else than real. "If you only knew, Miss Temple, or would only believe me as earnest and truthful, when I tell you how gladly, how very

Gladly, I look forward to these pleasant hours, you would, I am sure, grant them in pity's sake."

"I am proud and flattered, Mr. Hopetown, to be able to make you happy, but I must not forget that I am not my own mistress, and that these clandestine meetings are wrong."

He tried hard to talk her out of that, as they strolled on together, talking the time idly away until she said that she must go, but not unless she promised to meet him again, and earlier, that they might make pleasant use of the three or four happy hours. Somehow there was something in that simple, truthful, boyish face that made her heart yearn towards him.

"Next Saturday at five," he said, "on the Serpentine path by the old boat-house."

She had faltered a "Yes," when a heavy footstep made her turn, and Hopetown felt her suddenly sink, as it were. She recognized Charles Ruhl, and for some inexplicable reason, one of those presentations which render human nature a mystery, she feared him with more than passing dread as he approached.

(To be continued.)

MADELINE'S PLOT.

CHAPTER III.

MADELINE darted out of the door and down the green, sweet-scented lane, towards the appointed spot. Just as she reached a large bush of hawthorn, she heard a horse neigh. She started, for she knew all the horses belonging to the farm were stabled for the night. As if in answer to her half-formed suspicion, she heard a man's voice say :

"Hang those horses! They will betray us. I should not wonder if they had now."

Madeline sank, or rather shrank, pale and trembling, close behind the bush, and drew her dark cloak close around her, as another voice, and that a woman's, answered :

"It's only a quarter past; something may have detained her. You are sure you are not mistaken—sure it is she?"

"Sure as I am that I live. I could not mistake those eyes or that voice. Little idiot! She does not dream what a trap she is falling into."

"Reginald, why do you torment the girl? You will only make her hate you. You have got the property; let that suffice you."

"Hush, mother! I love her—that is my answer, my reason. Yes, I have the property, but not legally. There is another and later will."

"How is it that you never told me this before?"

"Because I thought the fewer that knew it, the safer it would be. You know when I first returned from India my cousin, or second cousin, met me at Liverpool, he was then suffering from nervous debility; I told him I thought I could relieve him, as I had great mesmeric power; he consented to let me try. I did, and he felt so much better that he was anxious to keep me near him; so he invited me to make his house my home until I found one of my own. I soon gained unbounded influence over him, even to inducing him to make his will in my favour if his daughter (whom I had learned to love passionately) refused to marry me. I think he hated me afterwards, but I did not care—I had the will. He even tried to rebel, but my influence over him was too strong. Once, when I was away for a few days, he made another will, totally annulling the first; but I soon got hold of that through my power over him. He died a prisoner to mesmerism."

Madeline had hard work to repress her sobs at the remembrance of her father's sufferings. Now she understood all.

"Then you destroyed the other will?"

"No, I dared not. Once or twice I have taken it in my hand, and held it over the flames, but something, I know not what, restrained me; it almost seemed as though a hand clutched my arm. I wonder where that girl is?"

"Reginald, where have you put the will? How do you know but some one may find it in your absence?"

"No danger, mother. There is a secret drawer in my writing-desk of which no one knows but myself and the old man who is dead."

Madeline started; he was mistaken; she knew of it, but had totally forgotten it; now she remembered once, when she was a little girl, her father showing it to her, and telling her it was his bank, and it never failed.

At this moment the voices of the plotters began to grow faint; they were walking down the lane again. Madeline waited a minute and listened, then, darting from her hiding-place, she sped homewards with breathless speed.

Just as she reached the door it opened, and she fell, half-fainting, into George's arms.

He started, paled and almost dropped her.

"Why, Phoebe, what is the matter, child? What has frightened you? You are as white as death."

"Oh, do not question me—let me go. I have been frightened, horribly frightened, but I feel better now," and she freed herself from his arms and hastened to her room.

Once there, she tore a leaf from her diary and wrote thereon a few lines; then she descended to the kitchen and beckoned to James. He immediately rose and followed her outside the door.

"Will you take this slip of paper and run down the lane? There you will find a lady and gentleman walking; hand this to the gentleman and return immediately. I wish to speak with you. I will wait here till you come back."

The good-natured fellow took the note from her without a word. Hastening down the lane, he found the couple, and handed them the missive, and stood waiting as if for an answer. The gentleman read it, and a frown darkened his face.

"Bad luck. She cannot come to-night; her mistress is not well, and will not spare her, but she will be sure to come to-morrow night. Well, I suppose we must wait. What are you waiting for, fellow?"

"An answer, sure, sir."

"Oh, yes. Well, tell Phoebe we will wait."

"What did he say?" asked Madeline, when James returned.

"He said, miss, 'Tell Phoebe we will wait.'"

"Now I want you to go to London to-night, and I want you to take me. I will give you ten pounds if you will take me there and bring me back before morning. What do you say?"

"Miss, are you gone clean crazy?"

"No; but my life and more than my life depends on my reaching London to-night. You cannot refuse me!"

"No, indeed, I can't. But what will the master say?"

"I don't know and I don't care. If we hurt the horses, I will buy more."

James looked as though he had seen a ghost.

"You will buy more! Why, girl, those horses are worth hundreds of pounds!"

"Don't stop to talk! Go and harness the horses as quietly as possible, while I dress for my journey."

"Well, if I must I must; but I expect I'll lose my place."

In fifteen minutes Madeline started on her journey, in her own costume, and without her light hair, and deeply veiled. She must run a great risk, for was she not about to enter the lion's den? And, although the lion was not there, there might be those who were authorized to detain her. She had her key, but perhaps the den would be barred; if so, she would be compelled to rouse the house, for enter she would that night or die.

At last, after weary hours, London was reached; then, in a short time, the house. James opened the carriage door and helped her out; she did not lift her veil.

"James, I am going into that house; I will give you my key; if I am gone over an hour get a policeman and come to my rescue."

She tried the key; the door opened; then she handed the key to James, and, entering, quietly closed the door behind her. The hall entrance was faintly lighted, the house quiet. Darting upstairs, she entered Reginald's room and closed and locked the door. Then she went straight to the desk. Had she forgotten the trick of opening the secret drawer? Great drops stood upon her brow; for a minute she fumbled with the lock nervously; then, drawing a long breath and collecting herself, she tried again. The drawer opened into her hand; the precious document was grasped and hidden in her bosom. Then turning to leave the room, she observed what had before escaped her notice; the gas was lighted, and on the table was spread a delicate luncheon.

"Ah!" she thought, "how sure he was of returning to-night!"

With a prayer of thankfulness on her lips she left the room and the house; she had not been gone ten minutes.

She then gave James another destination to drive to.

"Yes, miss." Then he groaned, "Oh, the poor horses!"

The place designated was soon reached.

"Here we are, Miss Phoebe; shall I ring?"

"Yes."

The door opened, and James started back as if shot. Phoebe, whom he had thought in the carriage, stood in the open door before him.

"It's only my sister; don't be frightened."

At the sound of her mistress's voice Phoebe ran to the carriage; there were a few minutes of whispering, then she darted into the house, soon returning dressed for a journey, with a bundle under her arm.

"A change of clothes, miss, and your morning dress," she said, in answer to Madeline's look of inquiry.

They entered Ashland just as day broke, for Madeline would not have the horses driven so fast coming back.

James let the girls in at the back way with his key, and then put up his horses; he gave them a good rubbing down, and an extra measure of oats, and then turned in for an hour's sleep himself.

Madeline and Phoebe rested for a couple of hours. Mrs. Ashcroft was not a very early riser. Madeline kept Phoebe secreted in her room, and brought her food from the pantry slyly.

The precious will was put in a safe place for future use, for Madeline proposed to keep up the masquerade a little longer, for reasons of her own. She would defeat Reginald in every way in her power.

She congratulated herself that all had passed off so well—that no one was any the wiser. But there she was mistaken.

There was one whom she had not outwitted—one who had seen the flitting and the returning, had seen her pass James, had seen him let her in; but had not seen the third figure which darted from the carriage after the door of the house was opened.

He had at that moment turned from the window, else Albertus had been as much astonished as James had been. He returned to his bed, and there matured a plot to be put in motion at his earliest convenience.

CHAPTER IV.

"Now, Phoebe, remember your lesson; be sure and not make any mistake, and remember all he says."

"I will, indeed, miss, for I think it will be as good as a play. I am a wee bit late, so my lord will be anxious."

She danced down the lane, singing a merry song; she reached the bush, and presently heard footsteps; and voices talking low. Soon Reginald Verner came in sight, with a lady on his arm. She carried a large cloak close around her. She caught sight of Phoebe, and hastened his steps.

"It is she!" he thought. "Ah, my bird, you are easier caught than I thought!"

But soon his exultation turned to rage.

"Mr. Verner, I am sorry I had to disappoint you last night, but I could not possibly come."

Reginald strode up to her, grasped her arm like a vice, and, peering into her face, looked long and earnestly at her.

"Confusion!" he cried, "I am foiled again."

"What is the matter, Reginald?" his mother asked.

"It is not she."

"Is not who?" asked Phoebe, in astonishment. "I'd like to know if it ain't me! Well, I declare—if you are not impolite! First grip my arm as if 'twas a stick of wood, so as it will be black and blue, and then tell me to my face I am not myself."

"Peace, girl! hold your chattering tongue. Where is your mistress?"

She did not answer him.

"Why don't you answer me?"

"You told me to hold my tongue."

"Idiot! do not exasperate me. Where is your mistress?"

"In the parlour, reading to her husband," she demurely replied.

"Girl, you know I do not mean Mrs. Ashcroft. Where is Miss Verner?"

"Sir, how should I know?" she asked, innocently.

"I shall go mad," Reginald said.

"You have made a mistake; I thought you had. How could you imagine a proud girl like Madeline masquerading here as a servant? Come, let us go. We shall be the laughing-stock of the whole house when that girl gets back."

"I believe you are right. How could I have made such a stupid of myself? Come."

He started to go.

"Please sir, is that all you wanted of me?"

"Yes," he said, shortly.

"May I go home?"

"Go where you like, for all I care."

"Oh, sir, excuse me for following you."

And, laughing mockingly, Phoebe started on her homeward way, singing merrily as she went.

Reginald returned to the hotel, and in the morning to London.

His first care was to look at the will, to see if it was safe.

He opened the drawer. What ailed the man? Was he dying? He grew livid, gasped, struggled, and fell to the floor in a fit.

His mother heard the noise and rushed into the room.

She saw his black face, foaming mouth and rigid figure; looked round, helplessly, for some cause for it, and espied the open, empty drawer.

That explained all. She closed the drawer, and rang for help, which soon arrived.

Here we will leave them and return to Madeline.

Phoebe had returned, and was giving Miss Verner a vivid and ridiculous description of the meeting, and Madeline laughed gaily at the rehearsal. She could afford to laugh now, she thought, or do anything in reason.

"Now, Phoebe, we will have a good night's sleep, to make up for what we lost last night. How was it you happened to be up?"

"I had been to the theatre, and when I got home I took up a book I had been reading, and I could not seem to leave it and go to bed. And lucky it was I didn't."

"Yes; it saved some valuable time for me. James has procured you a room in the village, where I want you to stay till you hear from me. I do not know at what minute I may be tempted to disclose who I am, so I want you ready to take my place. Now, good night; you must start early."

And mistress and maid were soon locked in the arms of nature's restorer—sleep.

At an early hour Phoebe started for the village, dressed in a dark cloak and hood. Madeline went with her to the foot of the lane; as it was still so early she did not hurry back, but sauntered along, humming to herself, and stopping here and there to pluck scented flower or listen to the carols of the sweet morning songsters. She reached at last an arbour, covered with trailing roses just beginning to burst into crimson loveliness; everywhere early summer showed her kindly hand. Earth had not long awakened from her winter's sleep, and everything looked new and lovely; the air was fresh and balmy.

She seated herself, drew a tiny book from her pocket, and soon was oblivious to all surrounding objects in the great beauties of Tennyson. A cloud seemed to pass over the sun; she raised her eyes, and met those of George fixed upon her in mingled admiration and reproach.

"Phoebe, where were you going so early this morning with Mary? And what, may I ask, was the meaning of your flight the other night? I have been waiting anxiously, expecting a voluntary explanation."

He waited as if for an answer. Madeline paled and flushed by turns.

"Mary—explanation—what do you mean? She had an errand in the village—and by what right do you catechize me so severely? Am I bound to make you my father confessor?" she indignantly asked.

"Phoebe," he said, "you ask me by what right I catechize you. Shall I tell you? By the right of love. Yes, Phoebe, I love you—I did not realize how much until I held you pale and trembling, in my arms, like a frightened, fluttering bird, that never-to-be-forgotten night. Darling, can you not answer me? Will you make me happy with your love?"

Madeline's heart beat high with love and joy; but before she had time to answer, except by a timid look into his eyes, Alberto burst upon them.

"Miss Phoebe, mistress's bell has rung two or three times, and so I took the liberty of coming to tell you."

"Thank you! I will come."

George bit his lip with vexation, and followed her with his eyes until the house hid her from his view.

Alberto hastened after her with fury in his heart, but an exultant smile on his lips; he caught up with her in the hall.

"So, my beauty, I was just in time to spoil your little game, wasn't I? He was just waiting for your answer, wasn't he? What would it have been? But I need not ask; those blushes, those downcast eyes, were answers enough for me. But my master is modest."

"Let me pass, insolent!"

"Phoebe, I love you! If you marry my master, I will kill you! But he will not ask you again when he knows what I do."

"What do you mean?" she excitedly asked.

"Ah! you condescend to pay a little attention to my conversation at last, do you?"

She turned haughtily away from him.

"Let me go; there is my mistress's bell."

Before he had time to prevent it she slipped past and darted upstairs.

"Where have you been, Phoebe? I have rung for you three times. I am so excited that I don't know what to do. Have you seen my diamond ring?"

"No, ma'am, I have not noticed it particularly."

"I mean, girl, it is lost."

"Lost?"

"Or stolen."

"Stolen?"

"Don't repeat my words, but help me search for it."

"When did you have it last, Mrs. Ashcroft?"

"To-day is Wednesday—Monday morning I noticed it in my jewel-box. Now it is nowhere to be found. There is the breakfast bell. I wish to see you in the dining-room afterwards."

"Can it be possible that she suspects me of stealing it?" thought Madeline. "She spoke so sternly, and looked at me suspiciously. Good Heavens! this is some of Alberto's work—that's what he meant when he said that his master would not ask me again when he knew what he did. But, thank goodness! I can clear myself."

The bell sounded, and Madeline descended.

George sat at the table, white as a ghost; he did not raise his eyes when she entered; the other servants were also there.

"Now, my good people," said Mrs. Ashcroft, "your mistress has lost a very valuable diamond ring; she has searched for it everywhere that she thinks it possible for a ring to get. Now, we do not suspect any one in particular, but for the form's sake I wish to have you all searched, and I ask you to let Mr. Ashcroft search your rooms."

"Yes, yes!" they all cried out, with the sole exception of Madeline.

They all looked at her in astonishment.

George staggered to his feet, pale as death.

"Phoebe!" he hoarsely asked. "Are you not willing to be searched with the rest?"

"No, sir, I am not," she answered, proudly.

He sat down with a smothered groan.

"Alberto, I believe you said you could throw some light on this subject?" said his mistress.

"I do not know whether it bears on this subject or not, ma'am, but you can draw your own conclusions. Monday morning I saw Miss Phoebe in conversation with a dark-haired stranger, a man. Monday night I saw her come flying into the house, almost frightened to death. Later in the evening she started with James for London, and returned at daybreak; she gave James some money. Tuesday night she met the dark man again in the lane, and came home singing at the top of her voice. That is all; as I said, you must draw your own conclusions."

Well George remembered her agitation and evasive answer.

"Phoebe, can you explain this?" Mr. Ashcroft asked.

At that very moment Madeline carelessly drew her handkerchief from her pocket; the diamond ring flashed on to the carpet; all started forward; George picked up the ring and handed it to his mother; he looked sternly and sadly at Madeline. That look stung her; she turned to him with the air of a princess.

"Mr. Ashcroft, appearances seem to be against me, but I can explain all if you will allow me half an hour and a messenger."

He nodded assent, for he really liked the fair girl, and thought that, though the prospect now looked dark enough, if she could lighten it, all the better for her.

Madeline drew her diary from her pocket, wrote to Phoebe one word, "Come," and signed her name; then, going up to James, she begged him to hurry and bring her back.

Turning to her mistress, she asked, in a low voice:

"Madam, will you allow me to retire to my room for a little while?"

Mrs. Ashcroft bowed. Madeline retired. The old man slapped his knee, and exclaimed:

"By George! If she is guilty, I'll never believe in any one again. Why, she is the picture of innocence and honesty."

George longed to give his father a good, hearty embrace, for oh! how he loved the girl.

Alberto began to grow uneasy; he did not like the turn affairs were taking; he had overreached himself. If he had hidden the ring, his story would have seemed more plausible; but when standing in the hall the temptation was too great, and he slipped it into the girl's pocket. His idea had been to make her journey to London seem the occasion of disposing of the ring; but, as I said before, he had overdone the thing. He had hoped she would have been dismissed in disgrace; then he was to have stepped forward and offered her protection and marriage; but now he feared his plan had failed.

At this moment the door opened, and a tall, pale, beautiful girl entered, dressed in a crimson and white wrapper and dead-gold jewellery, with magnificent blue-black hair hanging in wavy masses far below her waist. All started to their feet in amazement, for she had entered at the door by which Phoebe had left the room. George sprang towards her.

"Miss Verner," he exclaimed. "You here?"

The opposite door was opened, and the real Phoebe appeared upon the scene—wonder upon wonder!—James following.

"Miss Verner, you sent for me?"

"Yes, Phoebe, I was in trouble again, and, as you seemed to have the power of rescuing me, I thought I had better send for you."

"Explain this comedy," the old man said.

"I will, sir. I was in great trouble, if not danger, when I heard from Gerty that her Aunt Ruth was in want of a lady's-maid. I was then a prisoner, but I saw a way of escape. Phoebe had been dismissed by my self-appointed guardian, Reginald Verner, a very distant relation. We were at our winter residence. Had I been at Verner I do not know what would have become of me. Well, Phoebe bought for me a wig as like her own curly hair as possible, and, to make a long story short, I escaped and came here, where I had the misfortune to raise a feeling in the heart of that young man, Alberto, which he calls love; and because I would not marry him, he revenged himself by making me appear to be a thief. Reginald Verner by accident found out my hiding-place, followed me, and penetrated my disguise, although I foolishly fancied he did not. I agreed to meet him in the lane, to give him some information concerning myself, intending to put him off the track. I reached the place before he did, and hid myself, as there was some one with him, for I heard voices. I kept quiet, and learned all his villainy, also that there was a later will, and where it was. You may now understand my fright, George. I fled when they turned down the lane again, and I fancied all the time he had heard and was pursuing me. His horses and carriage were hidden near by, for I heard the horses neigh. My night journey with good old James there was to get the will, and bring Phoebe here to finish playing the farce, for I had sent a note promising to meet Reginald the next night. Phoebe took my place in the interview. I have been happy here, and really rather liked playing a servant's part."

She looked shyly and blushingly at George. He was not looking at her; he had gone to the window, and was now looking gloomily out. How he had misjudged her! Could she ever forgive him?

The servants were dismissed, Alberto looking gloomily enough; she was now for ever beyond his reach—the heiress of Verner and the lady's-maid were two different beings. Lucky for him if he did not lose his place in the bargain.

Miss Verner was made to feel very much at home by Mr. and Mrs. Ashcroft; every attention and care was lavished on her; she was rather glad to assume her rightful standing once more—for all but one thing. George held aloof; what could it mean? Could he not love her as much as Miss Verner as he had as his mother's maid? Perhaps her large fortune stood in the way.

Weeks passed. George still was only very polite, very deferential.

Madeline's pride was touched; she would leave the house and go to Verner. She sat down and wrote to her lawyer, enclosing a copy of the new will, and informed them at dinner of her determination.

There were exclamations of regret from all. George grew ashy pale, and left the table. Mr. and Mrs. Ashcroft begged her to reconsider her determination, promising to have Gerty down, to make her visit more agreeable; but she politely refused.

She left the table and entered the parlour, went to the piano, and drew her fingers over the keys; then she played a little ripple of song, seated herself, and began a gentle prelude. Then her voice, her glorious voice, broke out in gushes of music; then that died away, then she began, in a gently murmuring voice:

"I would that my love."

She felt a hand laid upon her arm, and, lifting her beautiful eyes, beheld George gazing at her, with worshipful, passionate looks. Her eyes drooped; she blushed and trembled in overwhelming confusion.

"Madeline," he whispered, "can you forgive me my unjust suspicions?"

"I have nothing to forgive."

"You are too kind to say so;" then in a hesitating voice: "You remember our meeting that morning in the arbour? You remember my proposition? You did not answer me."

"I did not have the opportunity; we were interrupted."

"And if we had not been, what had been your answer, darling?"

"Yes," murmured Madeline, faintly, but not so faintly but he heard her.

He drew her head down on his bosom and kissed her.

"You will not leave us yet, dear, will you?"

"Not unless you wish it. Why have you been so distant lately? I feared Madeline had lost the love Phoebe won."

"Darling, I feared Miss Verner and her fortune. I did not fear Phoebe—but I worship Madeline."

"As if my fortune would make any difference in my love!"

"But you know I was not aware of that honour then."

Mr. and Mrs. Ashcroft were delighted with the change of programme and the accession of a daughter. The marriage took place the last of October, and was the cause of great rejoicing to all.

Fickle Alberto, who had been forgiven and retained at the instigation of Madeline, transferred his affections from mistress to maid, on whom the bold black eyes and handsome face had made a decided and favourable impression.

Reginald, after a severe attack of brain fever, regained his reason, and, with his mother, departed for scenes unknown, it is to be hoped, "a wiser if not a better man."

James was always well provided for, both by master and mistress.

George and Madeline took a short bridal trip, and then settled at Verner, where we leave them in the first quarter of their honeymoon.

H. E. P.

EXPECTATIONS.

CHAPTER XI.

AN upper room of the Château Croisac. The casement windows were open. The light iron balconies were filled with flowers in bloom. A soft mountain breeze came stealing in, fresh from the heart of the Pyrenees, yet laden with all the balm and sweetness of June.

The room was long and low, with many windows, and with walls wainscoted in polished black oak, hung with gilt-framed pictures. A marble statuette or two, mounted upon pedestals, gleamed through the shadows in the far corners. A little clock ticked gently upon the low, wide mantelpiece. Despite the season and the fact that the windows were open, a wood-fire crackled and blazed redly upon the hearth.

In a white-covered, roomy arm-chair, near one of the windows, her great jetty eyes looking dreamily at the blue mountain-peaks, sat Joliette, the unacknowledged wife of Sir Mark Trebasil.

She was thinner than of yore, her olive skin was paler and clearer even than in the old days, but she had gained new beauty and sweetness, a deeper, rarer loveliness. The proud red mouth possessed a new tenderness, and there were softer lights and sweeter shadows in her dusky eyes, a more subtle grace of form and movement, a new and strange charm which even the most careless eye might acknowledge.

Close beside her, in a dainty little white bassinette covered over with costly lace, lay her month-old son, the unacknowledged yet lawful heir of the great Trebasil property.

And near at hand, half-hidden in the depths of an easy-chair, was seated the deformed mistress of Blair Abbey, her hands clasped upon the gold knob of her staff, her hooked chin resting on her hands, her keen black eyes peering from beneath her heavy frost-white brows with unwonted softness and pride.

She had been gazing for some time upon the tiny heir of Sir Mark Trebasil. The wee pink face, with the wide-open black eyes, was a strange and fascinating study to the aged woman.

She felt for this small new-comer much of the maternal tenderness she would have given to her own offspring, if Heaven had but granted her prayers and given her a son.

"Joliette," she said at last, in her cracked, discordant voice, which startled the young mother from her waking dream, "this child of yours is a true Trebasil. He has his father's features, and will grow to be the baronet's very image."

Joliette awoke herself with a sigh.

"Yes," she said, in a low, sad voice, "he is Sir Mark's copy in miniature."

"He must be christened immediately," said Madame Falconer. "The good doctor has been prating to me of French laws in regard to the christening of children, but I have replied to him again and again that we are English subjects, and that the child shall not be christened until we are ready. I think, however, that the ceremony should take place without further delay."

"It shall be as you wish, godmother," said Joliette, wearily. "Christen him when you will."

"I have taken great care to define your position thoroughly," said Madame Falconer, "so that no trouble can come to you in the future. The servants and the doctor know you as Lady Trebasil, the wife of a rich baronet now travelling in the East. At any time when you may choose to declare your marriage you can prove to the whole world, if you choose, that you lived these months at the Château Croisac under your rightful name and title, and that no attempt was made to conceal the birth of your son. It is well to have his birth and identity thoroughly well established, in order that no one may

dispute his claims to succeed his father to the baronetcy and estates of Trebasil."

Joliette's face grew a little paler.

"Do you wish me to take the name of the husband who scorned and discarded me?" she asked.

"You misunderstand me, child," declared Madame Falconer. "When Sir Mark Trebasil doubted your truth, when he spurned you from him and declared that he was angry with his folly in marrying you, and that he would never own you as his wife—in that hour he forfeited every claim he possessed upon you. All my pride rises against him in a mighty barrier. I would rather see you dead than suing at his feet for his favour. No! Your life with Sir Mark Trebasil is over. You can never during his life bear his name nor avow yourself his wife. But your son has claims which you may not set aside. He must succeed his father some day, and you must make the way plain for his succession. Let me explain my plan to you."

She drew her chair nearer to Joliette. The tiny heir of the Trebasils had closed his eyes and was asleep.

"Do you love the boy, Joliette?" asked Madame Falconer.

"Love him!" Joliette's face kindled with a sudden glow. "Love him! Oh, godmother, before my boy was born I thought I should never love the child of Sir Mark Trebasil, but he brought love with him. At the first pressure of his little face against my bosom, at the first touch of his little helpless hands I felt my very soul thrill to its depths! Love him! Godmother, he is my life, my idol!"

She made a little swoop forward and showered passionate kisses on the face of the wee sleeper.

Madame Falconer wiped her eyes.

"It is as I supposed," she said, with a smile. "This little fellow will be the idol of two lonely women. We shall spoil him between us. Now, Joliette, I know that Sir Mark Trebasil would give half the remaining years of his life for a son and heir. He is vindictive and unforgiving. He would not take you back even if you grovelled in the dust at his feet. He has turned his back upon you for ever. But if he knew of his son's existence he would not rest until he had taken the boy from you."

Joliette crested her little head in sudden, haughty defiance.

"He shall never take him from me!" she cried, fiercely. "The child is mine—my very own."

"But the law would give up the heir of Waldgrave Castle to Sir Mark Trebasil, and would pay no heed to your prayers and tears. I am an old woman, Joliette, too old to begin a war with Trebasil that might last years. You are too young. Your name must not be dragged into the courts, nor made the subject of a scandal. My plan, therefore, is this: You must return to England as Miss Stair, keeping the secret of what has transpired here, and resume your former position at Blair Abbey. The fact that you are a mother must be carefully concealed from every human being save those already in the secret. The doctor here, the curé, the French servants, Bittle, and Meggy Dunn all know it, and can swear to the truth if they are called upon to do so. Before we left England, I told your whole story to my lawyer, and I have recently written him of the birth of your son. These few will guard your secret jealously. No others must be admitted to a knowledge of it. Some day, when you may choose to claim for your son his birthright, you can prove his identity without trouble."

"Yes, thanks to your care and forethought, dear godmother," said Joliette, gratefully. "Do you wish me to separate from him? How can I do that? How can I bear to leave him in a foreign country, among strangers? The very thought tears my heart."

"Do you think I would separate you from him?" asked Madame Falconer, reproachfully.

"I have formed a plan by which you can keep him near you without exciting suspicion of the relationship he bears to you. You know that Meggy Dunn lost her child on the Atlantic. It is known to the abbey servants that she had a child born in Canada, but they do not know of the child's death. Her child was but a few months the senior of this one. I propose that she shall nurse your son and claim him as her own, letting him pass for the son she lost. We will give her a pretty cottage near the abbey and you can visit your child every day. When he gets older, or when Meggy returns to her husband in Canada, I will adopt the child as a pet and protégé, and you can teach him and love him and no one will wonder. By following out this plan, Sir Mark will not suspect the existence of his son and of course will not attempt to remove him from you."

"It is the best I can do," said Joliette, with a heavy sigh. "Do you think, godmother, if I were to apply for a divorce from Sir Mark that the court would give my boy to him?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then I will not apply for release from these hate-

ful bonds. I will wear my fetters though their weight kill me. I will never, never give up my boy. When he shall have grown to be a man, I will tell him all the truth and he shall know his mother to be blameless. Sometimes, godmother, when I look into my baby's eyes—so like Mark's eyes—the past comes back to me with all its weight of bitterness, and I can scarcely bear the pain. And then I think how different it might all have been! How proud Mark would have been of his son! There was a time when he loved me, but he tired of me very soon. So truly as I live, I believe that he was glad of his flimsy pretext for ridding himself of me," and a dreary look came into Joliette's tearless eyes. "So truly as I live, godmother, I believe that he did not once think me unfaithful and wicked, but, repenting his folly in marrying me, he determined to rid himself of me by one bold, unscrupulous stroke."

"Well, he succeeded," said Madame Falconer. "He has wronged you beyond all forgiveness. Does any of your old love for him survive?"

Joliette's features quivered.

"I—I don't know," she answered. "I think I hate him, godmother, but sometimes I fancy I hear his step, or his voice, and my pulse quickens and my heart leaps—yet I do not love him. Love him! When he has spurned me, scorned me, told me that he hated me, told me to my face that I spoke falsely to him, bid me go with my favourite lover? Love him! Ah, no, no! I could tear my heart from my bosom if I fancied that it cherished still one thought of tenderness for him!"

The passionate eyes gleamed, a vivid glow burned on the olive cheeks, the sensitive lips curled in a bitter scowl.

Madame Falconer expressed approval.

"You have my own nature, ma Jolie," she said, delightedly. "One of my race shall never kneel to a Trebasil. You are formed after my heart. If Nature had given me a daughter I should have prayed to have her as you are—a woman of spirit. And now to return to the subject of the christening. What shall you name your boy?"

Joliette was silent and thoughtful for a brief space. Then she said, gently:

"Dear godmother, he is your boy as well as mine. Will you not consider him so? And as a token that you take him into your heart as you have taken me, I ask you to give him his name."

Madame Falconer's stern old heart was touched. Her lip trembled; a sudden moisture came into her eyes.

"So be it then," she said. "I will give him the name I would have given a son of my own, if I had one. I will give him my father's name, Archibald Chichester."

That very day the good curé of Arpigny was called upon to christen Sir Mark Trebasil's son, whose name and birth were registered in the church archive.

The weeks passed on slowly. The summer heats grew greater and then began to wane. The little Archibald grew rapidly and thrived. He was as fair a child as mother ever loved. Madame Falconer regarded him with a species of worship. Meggy Dunn adopted him into the place her boy had left vacant, and tended him with a love that nearly stirred Joliette to jealousy. Mrs. Bittle made the little fellow her idol, and if he had been older, he would have been in a fair way of being spoiled.

One afternoon in September, Madame Falconer was seated in a garden-chair in the neglected wilderness of an old pleasure-chalet that had, in former days, been a charming resort for the ladies of the château. There were decaying summer-houses here, great trees, a rose-trellis or two, and flowers which had been suffered to lapse from a high state of cultivation into wildness. Yet it was a pleasant spot still in which to pass an hour with the book or needle. Madame Falconer was doing neither, only watching Joliette, who, dressed in white, was playing bo-peep with her little son, now four months old. Meggy Dunn was holding the infant and sharing in the sport.

"He smiled godmother, he really smiled!" cried Joliette, all delight. "Meggy says he is a clever child—ah, here comes Mrs. Bittle with the post-bag. Letters from England!"

Mrs. Bittle gave the post-bag into Madame Falconer's hands. It was unlocked and the contents examined. There were letters and newspapers, the latter falling to Joliette's lot. The older lady read her letters in silence, then sighed heavily.

"There is no news," she said, "but even the commonplaces little details of life at the abbey begin to stir me strangely. I am tiring of the Château Croisac. When shall we go home, Joliette?"

"Whenever you will, godmother. I shall be ready to-morrow. It would be well to go before separation from little Archie becomes impossible."

"We will go to-morrow then. Give the orders, Bittle," said Madame Falconer. "We will make a leisurely journey homewards, arriving there a fortnight hence."

Joliette, glancing over the newspapers, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Sir Mark Trebasil is at St. Petersburg," she

said. "The papers say that at the ball given by Madame Malofsky, at the Russian capital, the distinguished form and face of the wealthy Cornish baronet, Sir Mark Trebasil, were especially noted. You see how he enjoys life without a thought or care of the young wife he has discarded. And hear this: 'On dit, that Sir Mark Trebasil has surrendered the heart long deemed invulnerable to a beautiful young English lady, Miss Grace Harford, who has been for months a bright star in Russian society. The engagement, however, is not yet announced. Is not that a charming paragraph for a wife's eyes?'

"It shows in what high regard Sir Mark holds his wife," replied Madame Faulknar. "If I did not know Trebasil's pride so thoroughly, I should think he meant to free himself from you by means of a divorce. But I think he will spare us that scandal, since it must bring his own name into the courts and the newspapers."

"No doubt Sir Mark loves this 'beautiful young English lady,'" said Joliette, her face darkening. "So be it. The gulf could not be wider between us if we were divorced. Our hasty marriage is soon repented. I was easily won—I am lightly cast aside. Perhaps the hour may come when Sir Mark Trebasil will know something of the misery he has meted out to me. I see now how he hates me. One thing is certain; he may divorce me, if he will, he may marry Miss Grace Harford, but it will be my child who shall inherit his title and estates, my child who will succeed him at Waldgrave Castle. And he shall never know of the existence of that child till his dying hour—he shall never hear his son call him father—he shall never look upon the face of his first-born! I will guard my son from him who would be my boy's worst enemy, who would tear him from me, who would bring him up to hate and despise me! Yes, I will guard my boy as the tigress guards her young!"

With flashing eyes and head haughtily crested, the discarded young wife of Sir Mark Trebasil turned, and walked swiftly away, entering the chateau.

The next day the household was broken up, the French servants dismissed, and Madame Falconer, Joliette, Mrs. Bittle, Meggy Dunn, and the tiny unknown heir of Sir Mark Trebasil, set out upon a leisurely journey homeward via Paris.

CHAPTER XII.

We must now return to our narration of the operations of Mr. Charles Vernon, which, it will be remembered, was interrupted at a point some months anterior to the birth of Sir Mark Trebasil's son and heir—that unknown and unsuspected yet most formidable obstacle in the schemer's path.

In accordance with his engagement, Mr. Vernon was promptly at Blair Abbey at ten o'clock upon the morning subsequent to his first interview with Charlott Lyle. In order to carry out his pretence of being an artist, he carried a sketch-book under his arm.

He was shown into a parlour, where Mrs. Gorset, the housekeeper, presently joined him, duly boneted and equipped for the projected excursion to the Island Tower. A minute or two later, Charlott Lyle, looking very fair and lovely in her costume of sailor blue serge and sailor hat trimmed with blue, her cheeks brightly flushed, her azure eyes shining, made her appearance, and the three set out at once upon their walk.

Vernon was in high spirits. He had never been gayer, wittier, or more fascinating at ball or party, in his most innocent and care-free hours, than upon this morning when a load of guilt rested upon his soul and the purpose of a demon was in his mind.

The girl's youth, innocence, and beauty, all combined, had not power to touch his heart. She was very light-hearted; she called him "cousin" frequently; she appealed to him often in a pretty, childlike fashion as they walked along, and he smiled back at her, and his countenance beamed kindly upon her, but all the while the tense lines about his mouth did not relax, and the red sparkle burned and glowed in his black, glittering eyes.

A brisk, pleasant walk of half a mile, over the elastic turf of park and meadow, brought the party to the little lake known as the White Waters.

It was a pretty, picturesque body of water, framed in by softly sloping shores, and enclosed by tall trees which mirrored themselves in the clear water. A gay little boathouse stood upon the beach. Mrs. Gorset presented the key of the boathouse to Vernon, who walked away. The housekeeper sauntered out upon the pier. Charlott Lyle followed her, amusing herself by skipping stones upon the water.

"The last time I went to the Look-out Tower," said the young girl, "Miss Stair was with me. How gay she was that day! There was no sign of the sadness that has come upon her so often since. I hope she will bring back with her from the Continent all her old sweet gaiety."

"She will, depend upon it," declared the house-

keeper. "And by-and-bye we shall have a grand wedding at the abbey, I hope, and Miss Joliette will marry Mr. Rossiter. I think that Madame Falconer will be delighted with that match."

Charlott Lyle started and grew suddenly pale. The stones dropped from her hands, and she looked away in silence.

During the brief pause that succeeded Vernon got out the little pleasure-skiff and rowed it to the end of the pier. He secured the silvered chain attached to its bow to a staple in the pier, and sprang out upon the stones.

"Why didn't you get out the sailing-boat, Mr. Vernon?" asked the housekeeper, with a doubtful glance at the little craft he had chosen. "This is a mere cockle-shell. Its round bottom makes it peculiarly liable to overset. In truth, it has been capsized several times."

"You need have no fears if you place yourself in my charge," said Vernon, lightly. "I shall be very careful, Mrs. Gorset. We have only to keep the boat well balanced. To tell you the truth, I understand this sort of craft better than sailing-boats. I was a crack rower at Cambridge."

"Oh, that alters the case," said good Mrs. Gorset, her fears quite set at rest. "Step in, my dear," and she moved aside to allow Vernon to assist Charlott into the boat. "I don't mind the row when I have confidence in the oarsman."

She deposited her heavy figure in the stern of the boat, Vernon sprang in gaily, unfastened the chain and pushed off.

Charlott Lyle was rather silent on the way to the island, a shadow seeming to have fallen upon her bright spirit. Vernon watched her furtively, and presently the girl banished her trouble from her features, and seemed pleased and interested.

Once or twice the oars trembled in Vernon's hands; once or twice a strange, dark look came over his face; he cast a stealthy glance around him at the banks of the lake, as if to make sure that no labourer was watching him, and then a quick shiver thrilled the little skiff and she dipped strangely, so that Mrs. Gorset gave a faint scream and clung to the sides of the boat in terror. But no accident occurred. The little island was gained in safety, and Vernon drew a long breath of relief as he helped out his charge and drew the boat up on the beach.

"She is young to die!" he thought. "The day is pleasant—I'll give her a few more hours of life! The end will come soon enough!"

He followed Mrs. Gorset and Charlott to the old round tower.

"Shall we climb to the top?" he asked, with some eagerness. "We might imagine ourselves monks of centuries ago come to the tower to survey the country, with a view to warning the abbey against hostile approach. Is the staircase sufficiently strong to bear our weight, Mrs. Gorset?"

"It is not in good repair," said the housekeeper, "but people ascend it—"

"That is enough for me. I will go up. And you, Cousin Charlott, won't you come with me?"

"I have been up twice, and am willing to go again," said the girl.

"I'll wait for you below here," said Mrs. Gorset. "I don't fancy climbing such rickety stairs. Such adventures do very well for young people. I climbed Look-out Tower often enough in my day, but I am too old for that sort of work now. If you'll excuse me, I'll wait here."

Vernon excused her cheerfully, and, gay as a school-boy, led the way into the small round room at the base of the tower, which was lighted by the open door and the slits of windows. A narrow stone staircase wound in spiral form from landing to landing of the tower. Vernon dashed up the steps, Charlott Lyle following.

It was a long, hard climb. Now and then a step was missing. The way was gloomy and almost dark, but at last the couple stood in safety upon the flat roof of the tower, and sat down to rest. The stone parapet was broken away in places, so that but a vestige remained. Stones from this parapet served for seats.

"The tower was well named," said Vernon. "What a magnificent view of the country it commands! The monks could witness an approach when the comers were miles away. This quaint old tower reminds me strangely of the tower of Godesberg, near Bonn, only, of course, this is much smaller and lower."

"We seem alone in mid-air," said Charlott, dreamily. "We are like Mahomet's coffin, mid-way between earth and heaven, one might say. What a strange, lonely world it is up here!"

"I wonder how high the tower is?" said Vernon, walking towards the edge of the roof. "Mrs. Gorset looks like a pygmy below there—a human ant creeping on the sward."

Charlott moved forward slowly and timidly, and bending forward, looked downward upon her chaperone below.

Vernon's eyes glittered with startling brightness.

A start—a push—would send the girl whirling through space to the ground below—would send her from time into eternity! His hands tremblingly moved towards her. The blood receded from his cheeks and fled back to his heart, which beat and throbbed tumultuously.

One push and the second obstacle would be removed from his way—one push of that frail figure, and he would be prospective heir of Sir Mark Trebasil.

His murderous hands, white and sinewy, and now firm as steel, crept nearer to her. A moment more and she would have been lost. But at the critical instant, as if Providence had interferred to save her, she moved backward with a shudder to a place of safety.

And, with a shudder also and a long-drawn, quivering breath, Vernon also retreated from his position.

"It made me giddy for a moment," said Charlott. "What if I had fallen?"

"You would never have known what killed you," said Vernon, huskily. "You would have been dead before you reached the ground."

"Dead and disfigured!" said the girl. "How horrible it would have been! A sort of terror grows upon me. I feel as if I had barely escaped falling. See how I tremble! Let us descend. I am afraid to stop longer."

She looked at him with a white, pleading face. Vernon tried to laugh, to make some gay rejoinder, to rally her on her timidity, but his gaiety was but a feeble mockery.

"Yes, let us descend!" he said. "I will go first. Keep close behind me."

They began the descent of the tower.

Long before they had reached the ground Vernon was himself again.

They found Mrs. Gorset calmly awaiting them in a pretty modern summer-house near the foot of the tower. Vernon opened his sketch-book, and proceeded to make a sketch of the old ruin, Charlott assisting him by judicious comments and suggestions. The ancient tower with its slits of windows, half-curtained with ivy, furnished a strong subject for a picture, and Vernon was artist enough to seize upon the prominent points, and reproduce them faithfully.

Two hours were consumed in making the sketch. Mrs. Gorset dozed. Charlott talked with her cousin and the time to her passed swiftly. Mrs. Gorset aroused herself finally, and spread a luncheon which she had brought with her in a basket, and the trio gathered about it with evident relish. Who would have dreamed that murder was in Vernon's heart as he laughed and jested and made merry?

It was past noon when Mrs. Gorset proposed a return to the abbey. The others acceded without demur, and they were soon again in the boat, moving leisurely over the waters of the lake.

As on the way out, Vernon was vivacious and full of anecdote. But as they progressed he grew more thoughtful, and seemed abstracted.

"As the abbey and the tower have so many legends," he said, "so this lake ought to have a story of its own. Is it an artificial lake?"

"No," answered Mrs. Gorset. "It is natural. And it has its story, Mr. Vernon. There have been many people drowned in these White Waters. There was a beautiful heiress of the Chichesters drowned in this lake on her bridal eve. She was out in a shallow skiff, as we are now—she was with her boy-cousin—the skiff upset, and she was drowned. They found her body, and at the hour appointed for her bridal she lay in the abbey chapel in her bridal robes, the bride of death."

Charlott shivered.

"The water does not look deep enough to drown any one," said Vernon.

"It is so clear, that is the reason. But it is very deep," said Mrs. Gorset. "Sometimes when I have been rowing over these waters I have looked down into the clear depths, and I have fancied that I could see the white face of the drowned young bride. I almost fancy I see it now."

She bent over heavily, peering down into the water. In the same instant Vernon made a sudden movement to the same side, as if anxious to see also. It lurched the skiff violently, the boat upset, and all three were hurled into the water.

Vernon made a spring for the boat, as it seemed, but sent it quite out of the reach of the two women.

Their shrieks rent the air.

Charlott Lyle was quite near her cousin. Gasping and drowning, she put out her hands to clutch him, but he evaded her, and caught the bulky figure of Mrs. Gorset in his strong clasp.

"Courage!" he said. "I will save you both. Do not cling to me."

He struck out boldly, like a strong swimmer, for the shore.

And Charlott, abandoned and left to perish, gave one wild moan of anguish, and disappeared beneath the white and cruel waters.

(To be continued.)



THE HAYMAKING.]

KATE'S LOVERS.

"Maud Muller on a summer day,
Baked the meadow sweet with hay."

A LOVELY meadow shut in on two sides by fair hills, embroidered all over by blackberry bines that even in this month of August were touched with faint tender crimson, forstaken of their autumn splendour—the hills softly rounding to the meadow's brim; on another side a belt of dark old woods, where numberless wild flowers grew and faded through all their sweet unnoticed lives; on the open side the meadow rose in long green sweeps through mowing-fields, all fresh in their midsummer glory, and through ranks of tasseled corn, that shone and rustled and shook out its broad laminae in brave beauty.

And in this meadow a group of workers—the horse standing motionless with drooping head, the hay-cart filled with hay, fragrant hay, that still stretched across the fields in long regular windrows—the labourers, an old man who walked with somewhat unsteady steps, and handled his rake feebly; a young man, broad, sunburnt, muscular—an athlete in figure, an Apollo in grace and beauty; another young man, not by any means an Apollo, but exceedingly well got up as to the externals; and a girl—not a veritable Maud Muller. No rustic health and beauty glowed under a torn hat. Not at all. It was an unexceptionable Parisian hat.

Kate Lincsford would have thought a tattered Leghorn neither pretty, nor picturesque, nor convenient. It would not have been half so becoming as her own stylish chapeau, and would have exposed her lily face too much.

Yet this last contretemps need not have been apprehended, for Kate was one of those marvellous girls who by some sort of magnetic power repel all possibilities of stain and dishevelment, and are always daintily fresh and neat in immaculate, unruffled plumage.

John Alison stopped a moment. He was doing

more work than the other three, and might well rest for a little, and let the west wind cool him.

Such a pretty picture—a thousand pities it could not be put on canvas, thought John, quite unconscious that he himself, in his red flannel shirt that shone out against the green like a fiery blossom, in his stalwart beauty—his close dark curls that the wind lifted from a forehead, above a line of tan, as white as Kate's own—was the most picturesque figure in the group.

How pretty Kate looked! How deft her movements! The grasp of the gauntleted hand upon the rake-handle, the forward inclination of the figure, the slight foot—every pretty detail John noticed.

He was always on the watch for artistic effects. He was saying over Whittier's sweet ballad to himself as he looked, thinking of the young life so bright with sunshine and hope, of his own wild dreams and aspirations. Would ever the shadow of the "might have been" fall gloomily across their lives?

And with that thought he glanced over to where Auguste Coverly had thrown himself on the grass under the old apple tree.

He looked very inoffensive. It was not a Mephistophelean face that looked up at him—only one of that type which is so common—a narrow head, small in diameter from temple to temple, a dark face, with nicely trimmed whiskers, eyes gray and rather handsome; not a bad face, and not particularly good, that of a man conventionally moral, reputable, gentlemanly, a round, pliable man who would glide easily into smooth, comfortable places, and never rasp his own nerves or those of any one else by running sharp corners.

Now John Alison, good-natured, whole-hearted, as he was angular, was, as people are apt to be who have a good deal of character, occasionally exasperating. He was not at all satisfied with the way matters are arranged in the world, and though he submitted perforce he solaced himself by a grumble. For instance, he grew hot and angry, thinking of

the inequality between Auguste Coverly's outward circumstances and his own. Why should Coverly be set down in just that position that would enable him to win Kate Lincsford, while he, a poor farmer's son, must work, and push his way up to her level through fears and doubts, and perhaps miss his prize at last?

This was why the world looked awry to John Alison that lovely midsummer day, and Auguste Coverly, napping under the apple tree, seemed an impersonation of his evil fate.

Suddenly starting from his reverie, John threw down his rake, and went towards Kate.

"You must not do any more, Kate; you'll get too tired."

"Oh, I like it! How sweet the odour is!" looking up brightly. "Even sweeter than most flowers."

"And flowers are only fragrant in their freshness, while the grass must be cut down and wrought upon by the hot sun, its life and freshness blasted before it exhales its sweetest odours," said John.

"Ah me! I'd rather be a flower," laughed Kate.

"And I'd rather you would," John returned, in the same playful tone, "and you should grow in my garden, and I should have the tending of you. Only I should want to keep you under glass, to hide your beauty and fragrance from profane eyes."

"You are selfish, John. Now don't return the compliment. I'm too warm and tied to quarrel. Ah, we've reached the walnut tree! Now, John, if I only had some cool water from the spring, but you are dreadfully tired, aren't you, poor fellow?" And Kate looked up with a sympathy, half real, half affected.

John took up the pitcher that lay upon the grass with a satirical smile at his own weakness.

"Wouldn't you like a bit of ice for your water, Miss Kate? You know I wouldn't mind running to the north pole for you."

Kate watched him, smiling, as he strode away down the hillside. There is something intoxicating in the sense of power; it so aggrandizes one to say only to another: "Go, and he goeth!"

Great genius is not proof against this subtle intoxication, and Kate was not a great genius.

All the eighteen summers of her life had been spent at the farm, and from the time when her foolish little feet got tripped up in the long grass, and John left his play to console her, he had been her devoted cavalier, had been willing to fetch and carry, and do her bidding like a faithful servitor. And Kate, grown used to it, accepted it all quietly, without even thinking what it might mean.

"He is such a dear good fellow," said Kate, softly.

Presently John reappeared with a great cluster of azalia blossoms.

"Oh, give them to me," cried Kate, extending both hands like a delighted child.

"No! You wanted the water. Drink!"

He lowered the pitcher, and Kate put her rosy lips to the brim.

"I don't make a very handsome cupbearer, I know, but then Ganymede had not a blue and white pitcher, with a great longitudinal crack and a broken nose."

"Ah, but that is sweeter than nectar!" said Kate, drawing a long, satisfied breath. "Now give me the azalias."

"Give them to you, Miss Presumption? How came you to imagine they were for you?"

"Why! whom can they be for?" said Kate.

"Indeed! Mayn't they be for my sweethearts?"

"Oh, you haven't any. I should like to see the girl whom you would fall in love with," she said.

"Should you?"

Kate laughed merrily.

"I should indeed! Why, the idea makes you blush, and blushing makes you handsome. By the way, John, it never occurred to me before that you were handsome."

"I am glad your eyes are opened at last," with mock seriousness. "Did it ever occur to you that you are handsome?"

"Oh, yes, often! I couldn't help it, you know," said Kate, with arch naïveté.

"Humph! and being handsome, did it ever occur to you that it was your duty to be anything else?"

"I suppose I ought to be good and do good," Kate replied, demurely, adding, sotto voce, with a twinkle in her eyes, "now for a sermon; don't let it be a long one, please."

"But seriously, Kate—"

"Seriously, John, I mean to do all the good I can with my wealth. I have you don't know what delightful plans."

"Let me hear some of them."

Kate blushed a little, but went on:

"For one thing I should like to give old Mr. Marion a nice annuity, so that he wouldn't have to preach any more, but could work all the summer days in his garden, and have cream to his strawberries, and take all the magazines; I have heard him say that was his ambition."

"I applaud your design," said John, gravely.

"It would be a kindness to the parish no less than to the minister."

"And I should like to pay the mortgage on the farm, so that your dear old father could smoke his pipe and read his newspaper all the long afternoons, instead of working in the hay-field, and—"

"Go on!"

"And I should like—oh, so much—to send you to college, John."

"Thank you! I intend to be independent of college, and make my way without it."

"That is," said Kate, looking vexed, and going on as if he had not spoken, "I should like it if you were not so proud, John Alison, but as it is, I wouldn't give you a penny."

"And I wouldn't take one, Kate, if it would save my life."

"I don't think then your life is much worth saving," said Kate, low and still angrily.

John did not notice the thrust, but said, presently :

"Speaking of lovers—"

"Who speaks of lovers?"

"The presence of a pretty girl always suggests them."

"Thank you. Can that be original?"

"Never mind that. And you spoke of sweethearts, which was another suggestion."

"Very well. Let me hear what my unfortunate remark suggested."

"Only that when you come into that fortune of which you have already disposed in such a prettily, philanthropic way, you will have plenty of lovers."

"I think it quite likely," said Kate, coldly.

"You are as vain as I am proud, Kate Linceford."

"How vain? It is my fortune that is to win the lovers—not I, as you put it."

Ignoring this, John said, in a tone of soliloquy :

"I wonder if Auguste Coverly will be one of them!"

Kate started.

"Auguste! where is Auguste?"

"Asleep under the apple tree—poor fellow!"

"Why poor fellow?" demanded Kate, anxiously.

"Is he in any danger? Will he take cold or any thing?"

"He is in great danger," replied John, gravely. "When I saw him he was a pitiable spectacle. His collar was all limp, and his hair uncurled: and now he will wrinkle his coat, so uncurled this morning, and stain it with the green grass. And the earwigs may crawl into his ears."

"You are very provoking, John. I believe you hate Auguste."

"And if these things should happen to him, it would be irreparable ruin—why, Kate, I never meant to hurt your feelings."

"Why did you do it, then? Auguste is good and amiable."

"I beg your pardon, Kate. I didn't know you cared so much for him," with sharp pang.

"It is not that I care so much for him, as you call it, only he is my friend, and his mother is my friend; and if you make fun [of him it shows, doesn't it, that you think lightly of me?]"

"Heaven forbid that you should put any such construction on my rude speech. It was only one of my blunders, but you'll forgive me, won't you, Kate?"

Kate was placable and sweet tempered, and she smiled and held out her hand.

"Yes, John. I know you did not mean to be unkind."

John Alison was a sad blunderer. If he had possessed but the least tact, the smallest measure of worldly wisdom, he would have stopped here. But his feelings were in the ascendant, and he never thought of prudence.

"It would kill me to know that I had offended you," he began, stammering; then with sudden vehemence he went on, eagerly: "Because my life is bound up in you. Kate, could you ever think of me as your husband?"

He caught the look of utter surprise that crossed Kate's face, and trembled for his answer.

She did not mean to cut him to the heart, the word leaped to her lips all unawares.

"You!"

He grew pale, and got up from her side slowly, as if he had grown suddenly old.

"You need not say any more. I am answered," he said, with proud sorrow.

"Oh, John, forgive me! I did not mean to wound you so."

But he walked away, never heeding her, and poor Kate was left sobbing under the walnut tree.

But what could she have done?

She might have answered him differently, but how could she have fallen in love with a man who wore red flannel, and worked like any day-labourer?

Kate had fine aesthetic perceptions, but as yet they were undeveloped, and mostly took the shape of a dainty distaste for anything rough or coarse.

The working world was on the whole disagreeable to her; it was very pretty to rake hay in a sweet midsummer day—people did that in poems—but good honest work was another thing. As yet her dainty hands had wrought no harder labour than piano-practice or embroidery.

Yet there was one bit of work she had tried her hand at—so seldom indeed that fatigue had never been dreamed of—but she used to fancy that if by any strange disaster her fortune should be wrecked, she should fly to art for refuge and support.

It struck Kate that this would be rather a romantic and reputable way of winning one's bread, and she used to contemplate her drawings in water colours, with their prim outlines and crude, inartistic blending of tints, with complacency. Not that there was any prospect of such an alternative. Was she not going to make her débüt in society next winter, under Mrs. Roger Coverly's protection, and how could everything help being *couleur de rose*?

Kate was just at that time in her life that comes but once and fades so quickly—full of hope and full of trust.

Later one learns that there are drawbacks in every kind of pleasure; that thornless roses are an unrealized dream of romancers. Alas, that experience should be bought at such a sacrifice of faith!

Out in the country the splendour of autumn had died in gloom. Dead leaves in all the pathways, gray clouds in the sky, a dull, cold mist in the valleys, and a premonitory chill in the air. Why in the world they were not moving in town, Mrs. Coverly could not imagine.

"It's enough to make one die of the blues. All the people at the Cliffs have been gone a month, and the cottages are being shut up every day. Ugh! How dismal it is."

And Mrs. Coverly's thin, white, jewelled finger drew the soft breakfast shawl closer about her, as she stood looking seaward with a discontented face. The pink border of the shawl lay against a cheek still fair and young, in spite of the fifty years that had dropped their changes on her head. Why not? Dreary weather when she had looked for pleasant, an unwelcome guest at the dinner-table, an ill-fitting dress or an unbecoming bonnet—these were the greatest annoyances she had ever known. To be sure, she had made most of these, but it was not in the nature of things that they should tell upon her bloom. And so Mrs. Coverly at fifty-five was a remarkably pretty woman.

"It's so dismal!" she repeated, her face growing more clouded.

"Why, I don't think it so bad, auntie! I've seen nothing so fine all summer as this sky," Kate said, cheerfully.

"The sky! I'm sure it looks as if it would rain every minute. I don't understand you, Kate. Last winter you were wild to go into society, and you couldn't have enough pleasure, and yet you've been perfectly happy here all summer, with nobody but Auguste and me, and the stupid people at the Cliffs. What are you doing, child?"

She came up and looked over Kate's shoulder.

"It's only a bit of view I'm trying to sketch," said Kate.

"Oh! I'm glad you can amuse yourself. You have a most happy temperament, Kate. I remember, though, at your age I was pleased with everything, but somehow I've lost my interest lately."

Auguste got up from his arm-chair near the fire, and sauntered up to the window where Kate was sitting. Seven years had added little personelle. The whiskers were just as nicely kept, his morning costume as perfect, his face as innocent of thought as it was years ago. But he thrust his hands into his pockets, and shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Dull, isn't it?" he said, ironically.

"I don't find it so," Kate answered, rather shortly.

"Don't you? But you have something to do."

"Why don't you find something to do?"

"What, for instance?"

"You might read, I should think."

"Reading makes me sleepy," replied Auguste, innocently.

"Go to the billiard-room, then," suggested Kate.

"Well, I've thought of that, but billiards have got to be a bore. And then there is nobody to play with but you."

"Thank you for the compliment. The weather isn't too bad to go out sailing."

"You know I am no sailor."

"Or go shooting or fishing."

"I'm no sportsman, either."

"It seems to me, Auguste, that you are not much of anything," said Kate, severely.

She was out of patience with him and with her sketch. The hurrying cirrus clouds that swept so fast before the wind, would, upon paper, look like a flock of wild geese, in spite of all she could do. But in a minute she looked up pleasantly.

"I didn't mean to be cross, Auguste!" He smiled good-naturedly. He was always amiable.

"Oh, that is no matter."

Then he turned away with a slight yawn.

"I think I'll go downstairs and smoke," and he went.

Kate could not help the flush that swept across her face—amusement, indignation, contempt, softening into gravity at last.

"I wish we could go back to town for Auguste's sake," said Mrs. Coverly, from the sofa.

"Auguste is envious in town as he is here," said Kate.

"But for all that, I wish we could go," persisted Mrs. Coverly, petulantly. "I don't see what Mr. Coverly is thinking about."

Down in his close, dingy office Mr. Coverly was thinking very hard and fast, but of far graver matters than moving up to town, and the winter establishment. The partners in the matrimonial firm of Coverly and wife were extremely unlike, though in general they got on harmoniously. The arrangement was purely one of convenience, so far as one could judge from an outside point of view, Mr. Coverly contributing the financial supplies necessary to maintain, and Mrs. Coverly the fashion, style and hospitality that gave the firm its reputation.

Of anything like sentiment you would never have suspected Mr. Coverly—an eager-eyed, sharp-faced man, with business written all over him in big capitals, a man grim and saturnine at home, whose idea of social intercourse consisted in giving little suppers to possible customers, and showing them the lions of the city.

Mrs. Coverly was a woman, and had been young and pretty, and had of course once had a romance; even now she occasionally shed soft tears to the memory of the poor clerk who had the hardihood to fall in love with his employer's daughter, and who was forthwith sent away to open a branch house, and was carried off the first season by fever, thus putting an end to all further embarrassment in that direction. After that she had hoped awhile, and finally accepted Mr. Coverly with no very acute feelings of any kind. They got on very comfortably. Mr. Coverly was not unkind, and gave her plenty of money, but once or twice in her married life she wondered whether she would not have been happier if she had married poor Charlie, and done her own housework, and whether Charlie would have made precisely such a husband as Mr. Coverly: but such speculations only came at seasons of unusual depression, and were dissipated by the advent of some new fashion, or a series of morning calls.

Just now, while Mrs. Coverly was gently fretting at home, Mr. Coverly was in a world of trouble. Business was very dull that season; Mr. Coverly was hard pushed to make his payments; his resources were locked up in stock, and he was grudging himself the expenditure of an unnecessary shilling, when right in the midst of his embarrassment came a shock that startled him with fears of positive ruin. The great house of Roberts Brothers had suspended payment, and Coverly and Company were its largest creditors.

After staying in town for a whole week, Mr. Coverley astonished his family by coming down one afternoon by an early train, looking haggard and grim.

He sat down in the little evening parlour and took up a newspaper, turned it upside down and inside out, and finally crushed it into a mass, and tossed it upon the table.

Then he got up and strode to the window, where he stood looking out, scowling as if he disapproved of the weather very much indeed, which was not really to be wondered at, as the east wind which had blown for a week, and the mist that had come down in a persistent drizzle, showed no intention of abandoning the field. But Mr. Coverly was not thinking of the weather at all.

"I should like to know, sir, what time you dine here," he said, presently, turning to his son with a frown, and speaking in the tone of a man who is trying very hard and not altogether successfully to command himself.

"Don't know exactly—five or six, I suppose. I'll ring the bell and ask, if you like," said Auguste, composedly.

"Let the bell alone. Confound it! I suppose your mother is dressing. The dinner bell rang half an hour ago."

Poor Mrs. Coverly! Half an hour before he had laid his head in to say Mr. Coverly was come; she had not dressed for a week, it not being worth the trouble with nobody there but their own stupid selves, and she felt the exertion of doing so very disagreeably, especially as she was always half ill without the stimulus of society, but gradually, under the influence of a pretty toilet, she had brightened, and went downstairs in very good spirits.

The grim face of the master was rather dampening.

"It is quite a surprise to see you, Mr. Coverly. Why haven't you been down before?" began Mrs. Coverly.

"Been busy!" ejaculated Mr. Coverly, in a glum tone.

"Busy! I daresay. You men are always busy. I wonder how you can spare any time for your families. One might as well not have a husband," said Mrs. Coverly, in an injured tone.

No reply.

"Is there any news in town?" asked the lady, after a moment's pause.

"Not that I know of. I suppose the loss of a few millions, and the ruin of some of the best houses wouldn't interest you," returned Mr. Coverly, with grim sarcasm, followed by instant silence.

"Why, has anybody failed? I don't see how people mismanage their affairs so. I hope it won't be a bad winter for business—everything is so dull when times are bad."

Nobody inclining to dispute this truism, Mrs. Coverly made a closer charge.

"When are we going to town, George?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know! I wish you did. I'm tired of staying here," said Mrs. Coverly, with a charming want of tact.

"I can't help it. I've something else to attend to besides moving into town," replied her husband, shortly.

"You are always too busy to do anything for us," persisted Mrs. Coverly, putting on a reproachful air. "I wonder if you think we can stay here in this dreary place all the winter? It was well enough in summer, when there were people at the Cliffs, but now it is perfectly unendurable. I must say, George, that it looks very inconsiderate of you, and—"

"Oh, why doesn't she let him alone?" thought Kate.

Anybody of the least discernment would know he was worn out and vexed about something. Really, there are occasions when obtuseness seems a crime.

As Mrs. Coverly paused to gather up her forces, Mr. Coverly flushed quickly, and drawing himself up, said:

"Madam."

What would have followed was never known. The boy opened the door.

"Gentlemen to see you, sir!"

Mr. Coverly disappeared instantly, and simultaneously Mrs. Coverly began to cry, in a soft, plaintive way, and declared herself the most ill-used woman. And then, all unknown to her companions, she allowed herself the little consolation of wondering whether poor Charlie would have been so cross.

Kate, amused, annoyed and sympathetic, consoled her with such success that Mrs. Coverly drank two extra cups of coffee, and then they all went upstairs together in a placid frame of mind. If Mr. Coverly made any overtures towards reconciliation she was prepared to listen kindly. She was sure he must repeat his unkindness by this time.

They opened the library door. Did the repentant sinner meet her on the threshold, with an entreaty for forgiveness? Not at all.

Mr. Coverly sat at a table before a pile of papers, and near him another gentleman—the guest whose opportune arrival had been like oil upon the troubled waters.

At the sound of the opening of the door Mr. Coverly turned a pale, startled face towards it, and his companion got up instantly.

"Mr. Alison, Mrs. Coverly! Kate, you remember Mr. Alison? Auguste, you have met him, I believe!" said Mr. Coverly, with great nonchalance.

And while Kate stood blushing and trembling, Auguste went forward and put his soft palm into John Alison's larger, harder one.

"Why, Kate, here's a surprise for you! I'd quite forgotten you were in the law, Alison. How do you do? Really, this is a pleasant meeting."

John said it was a pleasant meeting, and then he gave his hand to Kate; she thought it was only a cursory glance that he gave her, but, cursory as it was, it embraced every detail of her person, and in that brief scrutiny his mind leaped to a joyful certainty; it was the Kate Lincefeld of old, his very own Kate, unspoiled by the world, unchanged, save only that the piquant charms of girlhood were rounded into the natural grace of the woman.

Before Kate could find her voice Mrs. Coverly relieved her by a sudden burst of small talk.

"This is a delightful surprise, Mr. Alison. Isn't it, Kate? Such good friends as you used to be, too! Really, it is quite romantic."

Kate smiled and coloured. But for the remembrance of that unfortunate morning she would have been glad to see him! It was that which made her voice falter and kindled the colour in her cheek.

But there was John, composed and self-possessed, answering Mrs. Coverly's questions with dignified courtesy, never apparently remembering that seven

years ago, one sweet summer's day, he offered himself to the girl before him, and was refused; and that between his wounded pride and baffled passion he had comported himself so coldly that he nigh broke her heart, which, in spite of her refusal, was a very tender and affectionate little heart; that they parted almost as enemies, and that in the seven years he had never sought or spoken to her once.

Was it that now he had climbed to her level his pride was appeased, and he could meet her without an angry sense of social inferiority?

"It is so strange we have never met before, Mr. Alison. Auguste said you were in town, and I wondered you didn't call. But I suppose your profession kept you very busy. You men are always busy, I believe. Here is my husband, whom I scarcely see more of than if he were a stranger. I always tell Kate never to marry a man of business, if she wishes to be happy."

It was a swift glance that rested for an instant upon Auguste, and came back to Kate; but she saw it and understood it, and was mortified under the rebuke and contempt it implied.

A little self-scorn mingled with her mortification. She had refused this man, and for what?

She looked away from Auguste, as if the sight of him was disagreeable, and so her eyes met those of John Alison. Was there not something like pity in them? And getting angry at such presumption, she regained her composure, and was able to exchange quiet commonplaces with him, and even to talk a little about mutual friends. The weeks went on, and still they did not return to town. Mrs. Coverly fretted and pined.

"Your father says he cannot afford any gaieties this winter, and that we must live very economically if we go into town. Economically! The idea of it! I believe he is growing avaricious; people are apt to at his time of life. But if I have got to scrimp and give up society, I'd as lief stay here," she said to Auguste, one day.

Auguste said he didn't know as he cared. It was dull in town, and it was dull here. He didn't know as one's whereabouts made much difference.

"There's one thing," continued Mrs. Coverly, "Kate is good company anywhere. It is perfectly marvellous the spirits that girl has."

(To be continued.)

FACETIAE.

THE colour of the wind was discovered by the man who went out and found it blew.

The difference between the sun and a boothblack—one shines for all and the other's all for shine.

A FOND husband boasts that his wife is so industrious that when she has nothing else to do she knits her brows.

No, sir, you are wrong. The falls of St. Anthony were not named after Susan B. Anthony. They are supposed to be 200 years old, while she isn't a day over 20.

AFTER years of careful study and close observation a professor is able to announce that frogs can see sideways, and that music has more influence on them than this careless world has any idea of.

A PAPER, speaking of a man who was kicked by a horse, says: "His life was extinct for a short time, but recovered so that he reached home on Saturday evening."

A YOUNG lady in writing to a friend, says: "I am not engaged, as you insinuate, but I must confess that I see a cloud above my domestic horizon about as big as a man's hand."

"WHY do you set your cup of coffee upon the chair, Mr. Jones?" "It is so weak, ma'am," replied Mr. Jones, demurely, "that I thought I would let it rest."

"WONDERFUL things are done now-a-day," said Mr. Timmins, "the doctor has given Flack's boy a new lip, from his cheek." "Ah," said the lady, "many's the time I have known a pair taken from mine, and a painful operation either."

WHERE THERE'S A WAY THERE'S A WILL. Auntie (who is standing treat): "Well, Beatrix, do you think you can eat another tart?"

Beatrix: "Yes, auntie—I think so, if—I may undo my belt."—Judy.

NO DOUBT OF IT.

Silly: "I've thought it over a good deal, and I've come to the conclusion that relations are a great bore—don't you think so?"

Sensible: "I think it most likely your relations will all be of that opinion."—Fun.

A BOY could not see why the "leaves" of tables, not resembling any leaves with which he was familiar, should be so called. At last he found it out. "I know," he cried; "they're called so because you can leave them up, or you can leave them down."

A MAN not a thousand miles from Liverpool once

asked another who he liked the best to hear preach. "Why," said he, "I like to hear Mr. —— preach best, because I don't like any preaching, and his comes nearest to nothing of any that I have ever heard."

"CLUCK-CLUCK!"

Mamma: "There—there, and now it's time for Herby to go to bed. All the pretty little chickens go to roost before dark."

Herby: "Oh, yes, but the old chickens go too."—Judy.

QUITE SO.—A weekly newspaper informs its readers that "a man with his head completely off was found quite dead on the rails of the South Eastern Railway at Woolwich." The writer of the paragraph was evidently surprised at this natural result, as he had often lost his head and was still alive and able to commit lineage.—Fuz.

BLACK MAIL WITH A VENGEANCE.

Under Gardener (to mistress of the house): "I've nothin' to say agin your pickin' the flowers, m'm, I'm sure, seein' they're your own; and as it's all between me and you, and nobody else sees you, there's no occasion for the head gardener never to hear on it. . . . It is dryish sort of weather, m'm, as you was a-sayin'."—Judy.

OH!

Slender Gent: "I daresay, ladies, it will surprise you very much, but would you believe that I am heavier than that stout fellow who's just passed?"

Ladies (in one voice): "La, Mr. Wileritch—impossible! How can you prove that?"

Slender Gent (with a giggle): "Simply because he is a lighterman! Ha, ha!"—Fun.

TANTALUS.

Old Party: "I say, my lad, could you eat one of those kidney-pies, if you were offered one?"

Vulgar Boy: "Eat one of them kidney-pies? Why, I could swollow the 'ole blessed lot!"

Old Party: "Could you, really? Now, I couldn't eat one if I were paid for it!"—[Exit old party.]—Punch.

WHEN the celebrated French chemist Orfila was on one occasion a witness at a trial for poisoning he was asked by the president if he could state the quantity of arsenic requisite to kill a fly. "Certainly, M. le President," replied the expert; "but I must know beforehand the age of the fly, its sex, its temperament, its condition and habit of body, whether married or single, widow or maiden, widower or bachelor."

A PONER.

Diligent Farmer: "Ho! you there, come back; that's not the road!"

Exploring Tourist: "Well, do you know where I'm going?"

Farmer: "No."

Tourist: "How do you know whether that's the road or not then, eh?"—Fun.

A LADY, annoyed at some scandal she had heard about herself, determined to sift it to the bottom. Accordingly she inquired of various friends till she came to one lady who apparently had originated it. The aggrieved one thereupon made her complaint, and inquired where the supposed originator of the scandal had heard it. "Certainly," said the originator in her sweetest tones, "I heard it from your own husband." Exit the aggrieved one, to take measures accordingly.

A CLINCHER.

An Irishman having found a horseshoe in the road, is intently examining it when accosted by a snob:

Snob: "Hello! don't you know what that is?"

Irishman: "Well, it's what I'm trying to think."

Snob: "Why, it's a horse-shoe, you idiot!"

Irishman: "Oh! what a thing it is to be the larning. Here I've been this half-hour thryin' to tell if it was a mare's or not."

Exit Snob.

ASSURANCE.

Friend (agent for an insurance company): "Ah, by-the-bye, Bloggs, got your life insured?"

Farmer Bloggs: "No, not now; I—"

Friend: "Ah, capital chance for you, then, let me put your n—"

Farmer Bloggs: "Oh, I was insured, you know—"

Friend: "Dear me, why ever did you let your policy lapse?"

Farmer: "Well, you see, I dunno, I didn't see much the good of it—or—I didn't die."

A GENEROUS HUSBAND.—Perhaps fifteen or seventeen years ago I saw a woman with a pleasant Quaker face, under a simple Quaker bonnet—I rather liked it—and her Quaker husband sitting by her with his broad-brimmed hat on. They had spent many years together, you could see by their faces. He was just bidding her good-bye as the train was starting, and I heard her ask him for a little money. I did not at all wish to hear what they said, but I heard that he had bought her ticket

THE LONDON READER.

and saw that he had taken her travelling-bag politely on his arm. She hated to ask him for money; a good many other women have hated to ask for it, too. She began to say: "I wish I had a little—" She did not want to finish, thinking that he would think of it and give it to her; but he did not. So out it came all at once: "Maybe I'll want a little money while I'm gone." The good honest Quaker turned his face towards her with surprise, and said: "What hast thou done with the sixpence I gave thee last week?"

A TERRIBLE JUVENILE.

"Pa," said little Simon, looking as bright as a fresh bottle of ink, "I've got a canumacrum that you can't guess, I know you can't; now see if you can. How can eyesight be restored to a man what's perfectly blind? Now tell quick, afore you think to tell right."

"I give it up," replied the old gentleman, expecting to hear something bright from the lad.

"Let him carry a hive of bees."

"How so?"

"Cos then he'll be a bee-holder."

"My dear," said a smiling wife to her other half, a morning or two since, "I'm going a shopping; I want a little change." "Pooh!" said the ungallant husband, "that would be no change at all, you go shopping every day."

A HARD CASE.

It is an old saying that nothing cuts like truth. We recollect, perfectly, of hearing, or reading, many years ago, a capital story of a man who, on his return from a public meeting, burst open his door in a rage, upset his children, kicked his dog, hurled his hat behind the grate, and paced the apartment backward and forward with the velocity of a chased tiger.

"What is the matter, my dear?" said the wondering wife.

"Matter!" roared the angry husband, "matter enough! Neighbour B. has publicly called me a liar!"

"Oh, never mind that, my dear," replied the good woman; "he can't prove it, you know, and nobody will believe him."

"Prove it!" roared the maddened man more furiously than before; "he did prove it! He brought witnesses, and proved it on the spot! Else how should I be in such a passion?"

The argument was a poser.

DESPERATE RESOLVES OF THE LAST MAN

LEFT IN TOWN.

To visit the National Gallery (for the first time), as an Englishman should really know something about the art treasures of his native country.

To spend an hour at the Tower (also for the first time), because there you will be able to brighten up your historical recollections which have become rather rusty since you took your B.A. degree just fifteen years ago.

To enter St. Paul's Cathedral with a view to thinking out a really good plan of decoration for the benefit of those who read letters addressed to the editor of the "Times."

To take a ride in an omnibus from Piccadilly to Brompton to see what the interior of the vehicle in question is like, and therein to study the manners and customs of the English middle classes.

To walk in Rotten Row between the hours of twelve (noon) and two (p.m.) to see how the place looks without any people in it.

To have your photograph taken in your militia uniform, as now there is no one in town to watch you getting out of a cab in full war paint.

To write a long letter to your friend Brown, of the 12th Foot, now in India with his regiment, to tell how nothing is going on anywhere, because you have not written to him since he said "good-bye" to you at Southampton.

To go home to bed at nine o'clock, as early hours are good for the health, and because there is really nothing else to do.

And, last, but not least, to leave London for the country by the very first train to-morrow morning! —Punch.

THE PRINCE IMPERIAL.—The Prince Imperial at Woolwich stands eleventh in a class of thirty-two cadets. In artillery he is fourth on the whole, having passed as high as second in the last examination in that subject. In fortification and geometrical drawing he is eighth. In mathematics and mechanics he is tenth. He stands fourteenth in military drawing, eleventh in military history, twelfth in landscape drawing, and twenty-first in chemistry and physic. He is the youngest of his class except four. Those best qualified to judge of his capacity and progress, both absolute and relative, are entirely satisfied in every respect.

Lake Titicaca.—Lake Titicaca, on the crest of the Andes, is the highest large body of fresh water,

and the lake never freezes over. Two little steamers of 100 tons each do a trifling business. Steam is guaranteed by llama dung, the only fuel of the country, for there are no trees within 150 miles. The steamers actually cost their weight in silver, for their transportation (in pieces) from the coast cost as much as the original price. A steamboat company has asked from Bolivia the exclusive right of navigating Titicaca and the Rio Desaguadero to Lago Pampa, with guarantees of 6 per cent. on the capital, and a share in all new mines discovered. Professor Orton, the latest traveller in the region, calls attention to the fact that Lake Titicaca is not so high as usually given in geographical works by about 300 feet. Its true altitude is 12,493 feet, and in the dry season it is 4 feet less. This fact has been revealed by the consecutive levellings made in building the Arequipa railway just finished, which reaches from the Pacific to Lake Titicaca. Lake Titicaca is about the size of Ontario, shallow on the west and north, deep towards the east and south. On an island within it are the imposing ruins of the Temple of the Sun, and all around it are monuments which attest the skill and magnificence of the Incas. There are also the remains of burial towers and places which antedate the crusades, and are, therefore, pre-Incaical.

THE FACE OF MY ANGEL MOTHER.

MY childhood's home reared its grand old walls
Near a woodland's peaceful shade,
Where birds and brooks and whispering winds
The sweetest music made;
And my rapturous heart thrilled day by day
To the blissful joy around me;
For the love was tender and pure and sweet
That guided my daring, jubilant feet
And close to that homestead bound me.
And though to-day I am standing alone,
With no hand waiting to clasp my own,
I still seem to list the familiar tone
Of the voice of my angel mother.

I see her toiling that I may reap
The fruit of her busy days,
And the precious seed she has sown will bloom
Adown all my pilgrim ways.
The golden stairs by which she climbed
To heights sublime are still shining—
One stair upon earth, and one on the sky;
And though hard and bare at the base, on high
Victor-wreaths are around them twining.
Though all must strive, while but few can
rest,
In Fortune's sun, yet I bend to my task,
For all the gain or reward I ask
Is the smile of my angel mother.

I think of her just as she used to stand
Beside the homestead gate,
To be the first to welcome the child
For whom she loved to wait.
She is waiting now by the jasper door
For an unending meeting.
And though, youth's freshness and vigour
past,
I reach her all travel-stained, at last,
She will give me kindly greeting.
Death came for her; he will come for me,
And the joy of my going home will be
That I go once more, once more to see
The face of my angel mother. A. Z.

G E M S.

A CELEBRATED author says:—"If I were to choose the people with whom I would spend my hours of conversation they should be certainly such as laboured no farther than to make themselves readily and clearly apprehended, and would have patience and curiosity to understand me. To have good sense, and ability to express it, are the more essential and necessary qualities in companions. When thoughts rise in us fit to utter among familiar friends there needs but very little care in clothing them."

DOMESTIC miseries cannot always be concealed by the victims of them; they lie open to the gaze of all who cross the afflicted threshold. But they do not concern the outer world, and the outer world has no right to look on them. Visitors should not see them, even when their dismal forms come boldly into view; and visitors should bear off no memory of them to exhibit to others. The joys of a household may be proclaimed far and wide; its weakness, its afflictions, its sorrows and its miseries possess a bitter sanctity that every sensitive and honourable soul will religiously respect.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

POWDERED chalk, if added to common glue, strengthens it. A glue which will resist the action

of water is made by boiling one pound of glue in two quarts skimmed milk.

AN ODD USE FOR HAMMERS.—Old Dr. Twitchell once wanted to blister some one in a farmhouse, far from home. He had nothing with him to do it with. He asked his wife to find him a hammer. The article was brought, put in a teakettle over the fire, and, after the water steamed and bubbled well, he lifted it out and gently touched it to the patient, in half a dozen spots over the seat of pain, with very positive effect.

STATISTICS.

THE population of the world is reckoned at 1,891,082,000; Asia containing 798 millions; Europe, 300½ millions; Africa, 203 millions; America, 84½ millions; and Australasia and Polynesia, 4½ millions; In Europe the leading nations have:—Russia, 71 millions; the German Empire, 41 millions; France, 36 millions; Great Britain and Ireland, 32 millions; Italy, nearly 27 millions; Spain, 16½ millions; and Turkey, nearly 16 millions. In Asia, China has 425 millions; Hindostan, 240 millions; Japan, 83 millions; the East India Islands, 30½ millions; Burmah, Siam, and farther India, nearly 26 millions; Turkey, 13½ millions; and Russia, nearly 11 millions. The Australian population is 1,674,500, and the Polynesian Islands, 2,763,500. In Africa the chief divisions are West Soudan and the Central African region, 89 millions; the Central Soudan region, 39 millions; South Africa, 20½ millions; the Galla country and the region east of the White Nile, 15 millions; Somaliland, 8 millions; Egypt, 8½ millions; and Morocco, 6 millions. In America two-thirds of the population are north of the Isthmus, where the United States has nearly 89 millions, Mexico over 9 millions, and the British Provinces 4 millions. The total population of North America is nearly 52 millions; and of South America 25½ millions, of which Brazil contains 10 millions. The West Indian Islands have over 4 millions, and the Central American States not quite 3 millions.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is rumoured that the Duke of Brunswick is about to be betrothed to Princess Frederica of Hanover.

The Russian Government has offered two prizes, one of 21,000 francs, the other of 8,000 francs, for the best and second best designs for a theatre for Odessa.

The system of flogging boys at school is simply disgusting. There is no flogging in the German schools, and they get at the best feelings of a boy notwithstanding.

It is rumoured that the French Government intend to adapt the English Betting Act to that country, owing to the enormous increase of betting-houses in Paris, and the threatened increase of such establishments at Boulogne and other places.

Be not ashamed to confess that you have been in the wrong. It is but owning what you need not be ashamed of, that you now have more sense than you had before, to see your error, more humility to acknowledge it, and more grace to correct it.

CHURCH MANAGEMENT.—Spurgeon says he never had the ability to manage a small church. They are like those canoes on the Thames; you mustn't sit this way or the other, or do this thing or that thing lest you should be upset. His church is like a big steamboat, and he can walk here or there without any danger of upsetting it.

AN AFRICAN DIAMOND.—The extraordinary "find" of a South African adventurer is now on view at Liverpool. Its weight is seventy-three and 1½ carats—a little short of that of the famous Nassack and Piggot diamonds, the latter of which was purchased by the Pasha of Egypt for 30,000L. Like most of the Cape diamonds, it has a faint yellow hue, which somewhat detracts from its value.

DERWENTWATER FLOATING ISLAND.—This singular phenomenon has again made its appearance on Derwent lake. It was first observed on Monday week. Its dimensions are small at present, but if dry weather continue it will increase in size. Its last appearance was in the summer of 1858, appearing on July 19th, and remaining visible for forty days, being submerged on the 27th of August.

ICE IN THE ATLANTIC.—The quantity of ice reported in the Atlantic probably exceeds the quantity of any season within recollection, and it has been seen farther south than any reported for some years. Almost every steamer crossing the Atlantic, no matter how far south of the banks is its track, has met with it, and two of them—fortunately only two, showing with what care our American steamers are navigated—have come in contact with the ice. Advices from New York report icebergs farther off the Banks—some in latitude 40°—and in large numbers.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ALICE.—We cannot render you the required assistance.

J. M. M.—The letter arrived too late to be of any service.

BRIGGS.—The writing is good enough for the purpose named.

SCHOOLMASTER.—The subject is in its nature too private to be discussed in these columns.

FLORENCE B.—It is our impression that we never received the photograph to which you refer.

A. C.—We know nothing of the matter referred to in your letter. The negligence, if negligence there be, is not in our office.

R. H. P.—It would be contrary to the usual course of affairs to entrust the management of money to a male person under the age of twenty-one.

TIBER.—We are glad to find your desires have been gratified. The colour of the hair is a pretty dark-brown and its quality seems to be very fine.

EBLANA.—In a previous reply we informed you that it is contrary to our custom either to publish the address of private individuals, or to answer correspondents by letter.

J. M. E. L.—You cannot hinder the hair growing on the face. Nature will have its way. The only safe way of removing such hair is by the razor, a process of course which requires repetition.

JAMES MCC.—Your views seem to be entirely bounded by pecuniary considerations. We have no sympathy with any one who seeks to relieve himself from embarrassments by "marrying for money."

HARRY Q.—We cannot make a selection for you. Our desire to oblige will certainly not lead us to that length. The affairs about which you write are emphatically of that sort which must be managed by yourself.

CHARLEY.—An ordinary marriage licence costs about fifty shillings. You can get a licence in the locality known as Doctors' Commons. As to the ceremony itself, you should make arrangements with the clerk of the church where you intend to be married.

C. J.—We believe you are quite correct in saying that ordinary salt is a good remedy for burns and scalds; we have frequently heard of its efficacy and are given to understand that it should be applied in the way that a poultice is used and should be made somewhat moist. Thanks for your letter.

MARIE F.—1. Probably the professional reputation of Sir William Gull, Bart., stands as high as that of any other London physician. 2. We have no knowledge of the book about which you inquire. 3. As to curling the hair, your course is to take a few lessons of a hair-dresser, a method of learning not at all unusual.

LILY.—1. We are pleased to hear that you have found a sweetheart. If he is worth having we will wish you to pursue the studies at the proper time. 2. It is the custom of most ladies to consider any and all men horrid who do not come up to their ideal notions or who fail to be their most obedient devotees. 3. The significance attached to the Christian name, Frank, is "indomitable."

CANNON STREET.—The extradition treaty between Great Britain and the United States meets the case you put. The defaulting and absconding cashier can be brought before the usual tribunal sitting in the district where the fraud was committed, and there be called upon to answer the charge. There are of course certain formalities peculiar to the case, necessary to be observed; these, however, are very well understood by the police of both countries.

FAIR ANNE OF CLY.—1. The meaning given to the name of John by the learned in nomenclature is "God's gift." 2. Toothache usually arises from a disordered state of the stomach. Some medicine suitable to your constitution should therefore be procured by you from a chemist. Follow his instructions given after an interview. 3. You write badly. You can improve yourself if you write over a page of a copy-book every day. Use that description of copy-book in which the copy is printed at the top of each page—Darnell's, for instance.

NUMA.—A mixture of eau-de-cologne and glycerine is considered good for the hands. It should be rubbed on at night. The frequent use of gloves will also help to give the hands a delicate appearance. But there are those who rejoicing in their handiwork, like to point to the scars and stains upon their hands—catastrophes of the labour through which they have passed. An assumed superficial delicacy is a singular object of desire for a man. He usually considers that such a softness, if attainable, is not worth the trouble it will take. Cleanliness of course is quite another thing.

IRA.—Probably the reason why the coat of your beautiful white Pomeranian dog has become harsh and dry is because in the constant washing to which you refer the soap has never been properly cleaned away. The hair is

very likely clogged with something like dried soap-suds. You may perhaps remedy this by putting a teaspoonful of salts of tartar in half a gallon of warm water and then with this mixture again wash the dog, omitting the usual quarter of pound of soap on this occasion. Dog washing requires an abundance of water. You want also a sort of hose with a rose like the hair-dressers use when they shampoo.

ROSALIE H. F.—The photograph submitted for opinion presents the picture of a very pretty face. The eyes beam with intelligence and brightness and the whole face and figure seem to represent the sort of young lady present to the mind of a writer of romantic ballads, who, in days gone by, extolled some fair creature as

"Pretty star of my soul, heaven's stars all out-shining."

Bright dream of my fancy, I love thee right well!"

To speak more soberly, we may say that the portrait suits us as representing a good and pretty girl who has sufficient sense to prevent her being spoiled by a word of commendation and whose society is likely to be much sought after and much esteemed. The colour of the hair is brown of a dark shade, and the handwriting is very good and somewhat stylized.

MAURICE D. asks, 1. If a man marries twice, has children of both wives and die intestate, who inherits the property, his second wife having died previously? Answer.—By the Statutes of Distribution children of the half-blood have an equal claim with those of the whole blood. Therefore, prima facie, the man's property, supposing it to be merely personal property, is divided between all his legitimate children share and share alike. It should, however, be remembered that the descendants of such children as may have died in the intestate's lifetime stand in the place of their parent, and farther that such children as may have been advanced by the parent in his lifetime must bring the amount of advancement into account, so as to make all the shares equal. 2. What is the best treatment for a swelling (hard) on the back of the hand, caused by carrying heavy weights? Answer.—Surgeons usually reduce such swellings by pressure and bandaging. 3. What is your opinion of the specimen of handwriting enclosed? Answer.—The handwriting is good, if the downstrokes were made a little thicker than the upstrokes the writing would be better.

AT DAWN.

Blow, wind, blow out of the south,
In the twinkling steps of the showers,
And kiss with the kiss of your golden mouth
The sleepy eyes of the flowers.
Blow, wind, and trample the fair
White necks of the lurking snows—
Sprinkle the silver-seamed garments of air
With the perfume of lily and rose.

The smouldering torch of the lily
Is trodden under the mould,
The crocus and daffodily
Are hiding their heads of gold,

Sigh to the crocus, and call
To the sweet daffodily, "Awake!"
Whisper, and over the garden wall
The red rose shall lean for your sake.

Blow, wind, blow out of the west—
Kindle the hyacinth's glow,
Fan the dull flame of the robin's breast
And set all the daisies ablow;

Summon the swallow and jay,
Loose the wild brooks with a rush,
Fill up to the golden brim o' the day
With the music of mavis and thrush.

The North wind, piping shrilly,
Chants at the lattice pane;
I hear in the gloaming chilly
The din of the dripping rain:

For the sound of your coming I listen,

For the balm of your healing I pine,

While the gray meadows dimple and glisten,

And the morning breaks ruddy as wine.

E. S. B.

VOLUNTEER.—The literal answer to your questions are as follows: 1. Persons can be married without the publication of banns. 2. The cost of an ordinary licence to marry is about fifty shillings. In addition to this expense of marriage, fees, in accordance with the position in life of the parties, are expected by the officiating clergyman, by the clerk, by the pew-opener, by the beadle, and if the bells sound forth their merry peal on the happy day, of course the ringers will expect to be paid. What would be the cost? That is your question; and a very wide one too. There is, in addition to the above, the cost of the home you must provide for your wife, the cost of your wedding present to her, the cost of presents to her bridesmaids, the cost of your own wedding outfit, the cost of the wedding trip and the honeymoon, the cost of the wedding-ring—most necessary item, and all sorts of costs incident to and arising in future out of such an important event in a man's life as marriage. 3. In most towns are found churches of chapels and registrars of marriages, and where these institutions exist a marriage can be effected. 4. A parish clerk is a capital acquaintance for an intending bridegroom to make. Such an official is generally a good judge of human nature; he would most likely take your measure very well, tell you much better than we can what would be expected of you and, if he took a liking to you, coach you up for the occasion in first-rate style; on the other hand, if in his estimate you are a person who would probably deem his views on the subject extravagant he would refer you to the office of the registrar of marriages for the district. Inside the portals of this functionary's sanctum the marriage contract can be the most economically completed.

BURTON L., twenty-two, 5 ft. 6 in., fair and in a good position. Respondent must be amiable, domesticated, and reside near Leeds.

JAMIE, 5 ft. 10 in., fair complexion, mechanic, who is able to keep a wife comfortably. Respondent must be domesticated.

JENNY, twenty-one, fair, of a loving disposition, would

like to correspond with a dark young man of medium height.

DAISY, twenty-three, would like to correspond with a dark young man of a loving disposition. She is rather pretty and of medium height.

H. B., twenty-two, rather tall, light-brown hair and dark eyes. Respondent should be tall and dark; a tradesman preferred.

STEADY HARRY would like to correspond with a tall young lady about eighteen, who is fair and has light hair. He is twenty, 5 ft. 10 in., and a bookkeeper.

AFFECTIONATE EDITH wishes to correspond with a fair young gentleman of a loving disposition. She is twenty-two, dark, good looking, of a loving disposition, with an income.

ALICE S., twenty, tall, fair complexion, blue eyes and thoroughly domesticated, wishes to marry a young man about twenty-two, who is tall, dark, and of a loving disposition; a tradesman preferred.

LADY MARIION, twenty-one, 5 ft. dark-brown hair, hazel eyes, a nice figure, and very affectionate. Respondent should be tall, fair, and over thirty; a clerk or a sailor preferred.

GWENDA, nineteen, tall, golden hair, blue eyes, very pretty and loving, would like to correspond with a steady, industrious and good tempered man about twenty-six; he must be fond of home and children.

M. E., thirty-four, medium height, good tempered and domesticated, would like to correspond with a bachelor or widow without encumbrance, about forty, who is good tempered and fond of home; a mechanic preferred.

JANE H., twenty-two, dark hair and eyes, and considered good looking, wishes to correspond with a dark gentleman about twenty-four, who would make her a loving husband.

G. H. A., a tradesman's son, twenty-eight 5 ft. 8 in., passable appearance, total abstainer, fond of home and of a loving disposition, is desirous of meeting with a young lady with some means which, together with his own earnings, would enable them to live comfortably.

KING WILLIAM, a mining engineer, twenty-two, 5 ft. 7 in., dark hair and of fresh complexion. Life insured for 4000, present salary 1000 a year, will increase to 2500, in three years, wants a wife immediately. She must be a teetotaler, respectable, have a small sum of ready money, and be hearty, plump, good tempered and good looking; a young widow without children not objected to.

EMMELINE, twenty-two, brunette, petite, vivacious, of a loving and cheerful disposition, thoroughly domesticated, a good housekeeper, is her own dressmaker and milliner and would make a good and affectionate wife. Respondent should be tall, dark, loving, fond of home comforts, some years "B's" senior, and in a position to give a wife in comfort, elegance not expected or required.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

CHARLIE is responded to by—"Nettie," rather tall and dark hair and eyes.

KATHLEEN by—"Harry," who is tall, dark, and thinks he is all she requires.

VALENTINE by—"Pussy," nineteen, light-brown hair, dark-brown eyes, and medium height.

ROSEbud by—"Willie," tall, dark complexion, highly respectable, and has had a first-class education.

J. H. W. by—"M. E. S.," thirty, affectionate, religious and fond of music, but her complexion is not dark.

WILDE ROSE by—"Anxious One," twenty-one, 5 ft. 9 in., a good figure, future prospects the receipt of 1100 per annum.

WOOD SPOILER by—"Louisa," twenty-two, dark, fond of home and domesticated; would make a loving wife to a steady man.

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